

negative

60.2

With these things in view, we remark, that the opening of his preface presents us with a failure, which is completely glaring.—The doctrine of the Trinity is there introduced, in company with some of the most noxious and violent opinions, which have ever plagued mankind. It is coupled with the most outrageous tenets of Catholics—transubstantiation and the supremacy of the Pope:—with the hyper-Calvinism, of the “straitest sect” of the Genevan Reformer’s followers—the imputation of Adam’s sin:—with the fiercest presumption of high-church Tories—the divine right of kings.

With these, it is given over to forlorn obsolescence, so far as concerns “the generality of those, who on every subject, but theology, are the guides of public opinion,” (pref. p. iv.) and after careful *μετωσις*,* lest he be “confounded with a class of writers, with whom an *intelligent* Christian would not be thought to have any thing in common,” (pref. p. xxix.) is most pitifully and taskfully, (we make a word for his own expression, pref. p. i.) dragged up from its Lethean oblivion, with the heroic (pref. p. xxx.) desire, of rescuing “the true character of our religion,” from “corruptions,” of which “the falsehood and fraud” of the “prevailing faith,” have left *utterly nothing*!! (pref. p. vi.) We cannot pause, to show the consistency of regarding a doctrine as *obsolete*, with the generality of those, who, on every subject but theology, are the “guides of public opinion,” and at the same time, of admitting, that there are “many enlightened men,” who honor it with respect, (pref. p. viii.) and many other “able and intellectual men,” who “sincerely embrace it:”—(pref. p. viii.) of its being thus obsolete, and returned to the “*tanta colluvies rerum*,” (p. 287.) from which it sprang and yet, being “the professed faith of the greater part of the Christian world:” (p. 287.) of its being so professed, by a world abounding if the globe contain them in “enlightened, able, and intellectual men,” and yet, of its having so thoroughly extinguished “the true character of our religion,” that *nothing* of it remains.

But really, a more imposing specimen of that charity, which believeth all things, hopeth all things, *endureth* all things; which *vaunteth* not itself, and is not *puffed up*, we have never beheld. Come

* *μετωσις* is a rhetorical figure, in which, from real or feigned emotion, one speaks of himself in diminutive terms.

forward, our poor Trinitarian brethren, and hail this Light of the world, who condescends for your sakes, to drop from his lofty sphere, among "the guides of public opinion," in "the departments of polite literature, moral science and natural religion." Shake yourselves, from the dust of the *dark ages*, amid whose "shapeless, discordant, unintelligible speculations," your doctrine "drew its origin," (p. 287.) and where it gathered strength amid "falsehood and fraud;" and hail this Deliverer, who has come to make you candidates, for the "clearer, more correct, and consequently more ennobling and operative conceptions of Christianity," (p. 88.) entertained by "the aristocracy of literature:" (pref. p. x.) conceptions, which are swelling the flood of public sentiment, and will soon sweep away those "gross corruptions and absurdities," which some have mistaken for our holy religion. (pref. p. xxviii.)

We wish, of course, to put our points in the light of strong relief, and may, for that reason be excused a little raillery. More soberly and seriously, however, if Trinitarians are in the doleful condition of bondage, to a creed, of "heartless, revolting, debasing absurdities;" (pref. p. xxii.) is this a "Statement," to persuade them to think so? is this the apostolic and nurse-like gentleness, (1 Thess. ii. 7.) which is to *win souls to Christ*?

We like his title-page. It is altogether unpretending, mildly defensive, and might attract even prejudice herself. But if this is to be its commentary, we apprehend, that like the clarion of war, it will provoke the stout, to buckle on their armor, while the timid, will flee in dismay.

Approaching the body of the work, after this unconciliatory introduction, in order to show its further failures, in bland and assuasive wisdom, we know not that we can take a better guide, than a remark which fell from Mr. Norton himself, in his review of Mr. Stuart. He is there attempting to defend Mr. (now Dr.) Chanping, from the charge, of having treated Trinitarians with "contumely," from having made it an object, "to hold them up, in such an attitude, as to excite disgust, or scorn, or derision," from having "striven to degrade, and render them contemptible." "If," says Mr. N., "if Mr. Chanping had said or insinuated, that those who hold the doctrine in question, treat the Scriptures with contempt, that, against the convictions of their understand-

ings, they refuse to submit to their plain language; but in opposition to this, teach absurdities as articles of faith; if he had said, that they were concealed enemies to Christianity, &c. we should have regarded Prof. Stuart's complaints, as not unreasonable.*

We beg our readers to remember, that reason, is a thing perfectly *huge*, in the idea of Mr. Norton, and that, therefore, the word "unreasonable," is to be considered excessively intensive. We will now follow Mr. N.'s own rule, *seriatim*.

1. To say, or even insinuate, of Christians, (putting together the charges, and what in Mr. N.'s view, would be enough to substantiate them,) that they treat the Scriptures with contempt, is to render one's self *reasonably* liable to the charge of treating them with contumely, of holding them up as objects for disgust, or scorn, or derision, of striving to degrade, or render them contemptible.

On p. 22, after having, as he supposes, dealt a death-blow to the Trinity and Incarnation, (which, though *glorious* to St. John, (i. 14) is, if possible, more offensive than its fellow, to Mr. N.) he takes the fixed and lordly position, that we must prove *his* arguments, to be *essentially* wrong, or, *as unbelievers*, attempt to show, that Christ and his apostles taught these doctrines. Mr. N. speaks again and again of his own plainness, i. e. as a plainness, to which he must descend, to meet the narrow and darkened minds of Trinitarians, who use arguments, which in "learned discussions," one ought to be "ashamed to urge." (pref. p. xxix.) There can be no mistake then, as to the dilemma, which he would develop here. We must either refute him — show him to be in essential error, or rank ourselves with open Infidels. We presume, he need hardly have put the word "essential" in small capitals, to show his superlative confidence, in the impregnable solidity of his logic. On which horn of the dilemma, then, he sees us hanging, even our poor eyes can perceive, without the aid of Unitarian optics.

On page 122, he speaks of Trinitarians, as avowing, encouraging, and abetting doctrines, which are "a solemn mockery, of all that is most venerable and most essential to human happiness." He had just been quoting, as examples, some of the most solemn and impressive appeals of our Litany: "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision, &c., by

* Christian Disciple, New Series, i. 318.

thy cross and passion, &c., good Lord, deliver us :”—appeals, to which his attention was doubtless turned, by Dr. Channing, who, in order to degrade the atonement, (*horrescimus referentes*,) represented Christ, as on a gallows in the centre of the universe, and God the Father, executing him as a common hangman !!*

Here, then, we are in the attitude of Infidels, making a mockery of the most venerable and essential truths of revelation. Need it be asked, whether a “plain” speaker, would esteem such persons contemners of the Scriptures? So much, for his adherence to the first portion of his rule ; and be it here remarked, that we give but specimens, and by no means all, which might be marshalled, in thick and hideous array.

2. To say, or insinuate, of Christians, that against the convictions of their understandings, they refuse to submit to the plain language of the Bible, but, in opposition to it, teach absurdities as articles of faith, is to be *reasonably* liable to the charge, of treating them with “contumely,” &c.

In one part of his work, Mr. N. labors hard to prove, that the Bible is any thing, but a plain book, and exhausts much strength in showing, that even if its exterior do *hint* of Trinitarianism (p. 105, top,) its interior, its better sense, i. e. that which his own penetrating criticism would elicit, is all in favor of his own dogmas in theology. With the Catholics in olden time, a standing objection to the free use which the Protestants would make of the Bible, was, its *want* of perspicuity :† while the *entire* perspicuity of the phrase, “this is my body,” was urged as an argument, in behalf of transubstantiation.‡ So, doubtless, with him, as with all who examine and interpret with *predetermined notions*, the Bible is a plain or a dark book, as it suits his fancy. But of his criticism more anon.§

Suppose a man to believe doctrines, which, “from the nature of the human mind, it is impossible should be believed :” (p. 22.) surely, no *plain* language of the Bible would teach such doctrines. If believed at all, or rather if pretendedly believed, they

* Channing's Works, 1st edition, 423, 424.

† The Occasional Paper, Vol. 3, No. 11. page 15. Lond. 1719. Gerhard Loci, Theol: Tom. 2, p. 329.

‡ Bossuet's Exposition, p. 57.

§ Note A.

must be believed, because of an anxiety, to save some darling system, by no means worth the cost. Belief of this kind, must be, what the belief of many Trinitarians is called — (pp. 9 and 10, at bottom,) “a mere evasion.”

Again, as to the *absolute* necessity of seeing his sentiments and no other, in the Scriptures, we refer to p. 88, where it is said, that Trinitarians have interpreted, upon no principles which CAN BE defended : to p. 105, where it is averred, that, be the true sense of the Scriptures what it may, their Trinitarian exposition MUST BE false : to p. 131, where, without the *slightest* reason, the reading *θεός* in 1 Tim. iii. 16, is declared “spurious,” when Dr. Henderson, and Mr. Stuart,* and Dr. Burton,† have maintained the *direct reverse*, and for numerous and most able reasons : to p. 148, where it is said, “every one MUST PERCEIVE” his version of Rom. ix. 5, to be in the highest degree proper and natural ; when the very learned Michaelis has said, “I, for my part, sincerely believe, that St. Paul here delivers the same doctrine, of the *Divinity* of Christ, which is elsewhere, unquestionably maintained in the New Testament ;”‡ and when even Griesbach himself has admitted, “there are so many arguments, for the true Deity of Christ, he sees not how it can be called in question, the divine authority of the Scripture being granted, and just rules of ‘interpretation acknowledged.”§ — Such subjects, as a whole system of principles of interpretation, and all the Trinitarian expositions of the Bible, *ever* written, and such texts, as 1 Tim. iii. 16, and Rom. ix. 5, are hardly matters to be despatched, in *half a dozen lines*, in the face of the labors and opinions, of men like these. But there is not, even a palliative “I think,” or any qualifying word whatever. Nothing, but the inevitable necessity, is before us, of seeing with Mr. N.’s eyes, or, of being voluntarily blind or pitifully ignorant. This is his favorite way of putting the case, leaving us but the equivocal comfort, of this most humiliating choice.

A few, and but a few instances, are quoted. It is hardly

* Biblical Repository, ii. 1—80.

† Burton’s Ante-Nicene Fathers, 158, &c. 2d edition.

‡ Blomfield’s N. Test. ii. 55.

§ Pref. to his N. Test. Vol. ii. edition, 1775.

necessary, though it may be useful, to remind our readers, that it is a good law of interpretation, to give passages that sense, which the temper, &c. of an individual allows, not to say requires.*

Of Mr. N.'s disposition, his preface seems to teem with proof, showing it to be dictatorial and contemptuous: not to speak of other parts, which appear quite ignitable, at least furtive indications of a temper, that, under no heavy blasts of contradiction, might mount into a flame. Of course, one is not to hesitate about giving *his* expressions their full scope. Although he has much to urge, respecting the "intrinsic ambiguity" of language, we are not to distil his own, through the alembic of learned criticism, before we can extract its *spirit*.

When, then, Mr. N. speaks of the incredibility of the Trinity, and the pre-éminent incredibility (p. 18.) of that Incarnation, which angels welcomed with shouts of joy, we suppose him to mean, that nothing but our wilful blindness or deplorable stupidity, nothing but falsehood or fraud, (pref. p. vi.) nothing but ignorance or bigotry or party spirit, (pref. p. ix.) prevent us from *submitting* to his positions. When he speaks of a "must be," or a "can be," as he knows "the whole truth," (p. 20.) on many a recondite subject, it is a "must be," or a "can be," from which there is no appeal whatever.

If a shadow of doubt obscure this reasoning page 121, will disperse it in a moment. There, after quoting those passages from the Litany, to which reference has been made before, he asks,— "How many join in these petitions, with an intelligent belief of the propositions contained in them? I answer, *not one*; for, when understood they *cannot* be believed."† — And must the answer be, *not one*? and, for fear that should not be strong enough, not one, with all possible weight of emphasis, as the underscoring intimates?

Shades of Pascal and Bacon! of Hale and Boyle! of Hooker and Barrow! of Usher and Taylor! of How and Herbert!‡ of Addison and Johnson! of Perceval§ and Wilberforce! did ye

* Ernesti's Institutes, Pt. 1. Sect. 2. § 5, and chap. 1. § 16. Same section.

† Note B.

‡ How was a statesman, and might have been an ambassador, had he been chosen. Herbert was, and might have been the same; but both chose pious retirement.

§ Christian Gentleman, p. 167. Eng. edition.

know *nothing* — *nothing* of what ye were saying, when language like this was upon your lips? * Shall one rude dash of a modern professor's pen write you all fools? Oh! if it has come to this, would it be wonderful if we should say, "patience is stale, and we are weary of it?" — But let us explain this matter, as we can. The wielder of such a besom of proscription comes from an Academy, where an *ars critica*, and an *ars polemica*, peculiarly its own, is sometimes taught. Many of our readers may not know what impressive lessons have been given, in overweening confidence, in the schools of Anti-Trinitarian theology. We give the following, as an illustration. Socinus, once held a conference with Francken, about the worship of Christ; for this "incomparable man," as he was called, never was wise enough, to reject that notorious practice of the primitive Christians — nay, he even pronounced those, who refused to worship Christ, *no Christians*, and persecuted them, down to the grave. — *Rees's Racovian Catechism*, 199. Francken started at the very outset, as have too many of his brethren, "by slighting the mean learning of every one." † Socinus was, of course, provoked to give full proof of his "incomparable" powers. But when he urged certain texts, as conclusive evidence of the correctness of his views, and Francken retorted, that those texts might be explained of *civil* and not *religious* honor or worship, — how, with what unanswerable argument, did he put him to shame and silence? "I AM AS CERTAIN," said he, "OF THE TRUTH OF MY OPINIONS, AS THAT I HAVE THIS HAT IN MY HAND." ‡

A prostrating, nay, petrifying demonstration! the formidable power of which, Mr. N. has fully tested, and, in the instances above and below, with a boldness and force well worthy his master, in dialectics and theology. "I have made no propositions which I do not fully believe; I have urged no arguments, but what have brought conviction to my own mind; I have written as one, who, being fully persuaded himself, and regarding his subject as free from all doubt and difficulty, is satisfied that nothing more is to be done than to explain to others, in intelligible language, the views which are present to his own mind." (pref. p.

* Note C.

† Harleian Miscellany, Vol. vii, p. 222.

‡ Bibliotheca Fratrum, Pol. ii. 768.

xxix.) We hope the confidence of this passage, and its context, is their worst feature; but must candidly say, we fear there is a grievous and ironical contrast, running quite through the whole.*

So much for Trinitarian refusal to submit to the plain language of Scripture, against the conviction of the understanding. We come, now, to the second part of the second specification, and shall attempt to show, that Mr. N. is *reasonably* liable, &c. since he (not insinuates, — the credit must be given him of scorning so weak a tool as insinuation) most authoritatively and palpably declares, that Trinitarians “teach absurdities, as articles of faith.”

Let us turn to p. 78. There, “Orthodox theology,” (i. e. Trinitarian, for this is its meaning in N. England,) is represented as “the peculiar region of words without meaning, of doctrines confessedly false in their proper sense, and explained in no other; of the most portentous absurdities, put forward as truths of the highest import; and of contradictory propositions, thrown together without an attempt to reconcile them.” — But, what must an “intelligent Christian” think of those, about whom it can be said, not in sport, but with the deep gravity which feels that it has “no liberty to trifle,” (p. 17.) that their whole creed is meaningless, — that they teach doctrines confessedly false, — that they put forward portentous absurdities as truths of the highest import, — that they uphold contradictory propositions, without an attempt to reconcile them? Would the pure and lofty-minded “set them with the dogs of their flock?” Most surely not. And yet, this is the way to treat and greet a fellow-Christian: i. e. fellow-Christian, if some have not grown stern enough, at last, to deny the name of Christian, as well as common understanding, to a believer in the Trinity.

There are even choicer epithets in store, however, in Mr. Norton’s magazine of niceties, than the above. On p. 86, he compares the doctrines of Trinitarians, to “the monstrous legends of the Hindoo superstition.” On p. 122, he directly calls them “revolting absurdities,” taught too, as *essential* parts of Christianity. On p. 292, he declares of them, or of his caricature of them, (it matters little which, for the object in view,) that their

* Note D.

"absurdity, is as gross as their impiety." We believe he has at last reached the zenith of climax ; for an absurdity, at once gross, and as impious as gross, is undoubtedly peerless.

Some might ask here, —Would a gentleman write thus? But it is our consolation to believe, that there are Unitarians, whom we sincerely esteem, nay, honor and love, who would approve such coarse severity as little as ourselves, and think it as ungainful and unwise.

3. We come now to the third specification, which decides for us, that any one, who will say or insinuate, that a professing Christian is a concealed enemy of Christianity, is *reasonably* liable to the censure of treating him with "contumely;" of making it an object, to hold him up to "disgust, or scorn, or derision;" of striving "to degrade and render him contemptible."

Could they be esteemed friends to Christianity, who attempted to draw that from its doctrines, for which there were not, in its sacred records, *one pretence*? or they, who reduced it to the luckless and repulsive plight, of an *obsolete and vulgar superstition*? or they, who, in exhibiting it, paid *no respect* to the reason which God gave us, when he formed us in his likeness, but rendered it insulting and degrading to their fellow-creatures? or they, who, with all their might, declare it to contain such doctrines, as if it were possible for them to have their full influence on men, would make the God of the Bible an object of utter horror and detestation? or they, the whole tendency of whose representations of it, shut men, not *up to*, according to the expressive metaphor of Paul, but *out of* the faith; in other words, enticed or constrained them to be infidels?

Is it much less, than "a solemn mockery, of all that is most venerable" in human reason, to ask, whether such men, can be friends of the religion of Jesus Christ? Could the virulent Paine, or the sneering Gibbon, more effectually undermine Christianity, than such deplorable abettors of it? Did they ever assail it, with a more "pernicious opposition," than is ascribed to the "false systems" of Trinitarians? (p. 293.) Could their baneful and blighting labors, be depicted in colors of higher glow, in terms of more abhorrent condemnation? Did Tacitus speak more bitterly of Christianity, when he called it "a pestilent superstition,"

exitiabilis superstitio; or of Christians, when he said, they "were chargeable with hatred for their kind," *odio humani generis convicti sunt*?*

But all and every one of the characteristics above, are by Mr. N. literally and determinately ascribed to Trinitarians. We cannot lift our brows, from our sorry humiliation, but he has ready "the hand-writing which is against us," drawn out with a pen of iron: — would he nail it upon our temples, with the spirit of Jael? — For the absence of all pretence of texts, establishing the Trinity and Incarnation; see pp. 23, and 47.† For our lowering Christianity to the level of an obsolete and vulgar superstition; see pp. 293 and 122. For our converting Christianity into what, if it were influential, would make God an object of utter horror and detestation; see p. 292. For the last specification, such pages as p. 86, of the work, and p. vi. of the preface, where he unblenchingly declares, that Trinitarian systems "have counteracted the whole evidence of divine revelation," after which, without one solitary hint at the frightful responsibility of such a venture, he presumes to lay all the infidelity of nominal Christendom at the door of Orthodox theology. To the terrors of such a "statement," if it were possible to augment them, he has on p. 120, added a finishing stroke. The doctrine of the Trinity is there declared to have "*a rank odor of the 'HOLY and APOSTOLIC court of the Inquisition.' Persecution, torture, murder, all that is malignant in bigotry, all that is loathsome in hypocrisy, — UNMIXED EVIL (p. 287.) has followed in its train.*"‡

O! thou blessed Spirit of celestial wisdom, whose fruit (Gal. v. 22.) is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness,—are these words which thine inspiration has taught, "to convert the sinner from the error of his way, and to hide a multitude of sins?" Is this a method of thy choosing, who wast to take, not the weapons of carnal warfare, but "the things of Jesus," to show

* Annals, Lib. xv. ch. 44.

† With this complaint, of the want of *express* passages, we must beg our readers to compare the concessions on p. 105, and the *drift* of the section there closed. Is not here, again, another proof, that Protestants as well as Catholics, can advocate or object to, doctrines, for either the perspicuity or want of perspicuity, in Scripture? Note A, and the text connected with it.

‡ Note E.

them unto men, and convince them of sin and righteousness? Didst Thou sanction such reclaiming tuition, who saidst, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more?" Are here, gleams of his temper, who said, He would not condemn even Sodom and Gomorrah, if the mantle of *ten righteous* could be thrown over their enormities? Has a new commission been issued from the court of the King of kings, since the annunciation of that great decree, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord?"

But we descend to lower, and to some, perhaps, more convincing arguments. We ask, whether it were too much to expect, that his own words might fly in the face of such a denunciator? "Some of our opponents," he says, "insist, in language which seem to us extremely presumptuous, that if we reject their doctrines, we must also reject the Scriptures, and give up our Christian faith. They are not very scrupulous, in refraining from the use of those somewhat dishonorable weapons of warfare, insinuations and charges of real or virtual infidelity."* How does this tissue of judicial asseveration compare with the liberty of judgment, which an Hon. and highly respectable and estimable gentleman of his own persuasion, says we must not exceed? "Without doubt, every man may endeavor to propagate his own religious sentiments, by reason, argument, and persuasion, and especially, by showing in his conduct, that they are productive of all the virtues, including *charity*; but this does not give him authority to condemn the sentiments of others. He may allege, that they do not accord with his belief and his convictions; but he has no jurisdiction to decide, that they are repugnant to the Scriptures."† How compares it with the language of Dr. Channing, writing as the oracle of his party? "Mistake in judgment, is the *heaviest* charge which one denomination has now a right to urge against another." "The fashionable mode of bearing testimony," i. e. by terrifying epithets, &c. "is a weapon, which will always be most successful in the hands of the *proud*, the *positive*, and *overbearing*."‡ How compares it even with the counsel of Voltaire? "If a man would recommend his religion to strangers or his countrymen, should he not go about it with the most winning composure, the most insinuating mildness? If he sets out with say-

* Christian Disciple, New Series, i. 397 and 8.

† Letter of Mr. Gray, to Gov. Lincoln, 3d edition, p. 35.

‡ Remarks on Dr. Worcester's second Letter, pp. 28, 29.

ing, that what he declares is *demonstrably true*, he will meet strong opposition; and if he takes it upon him to tell them, that they reject his doctrine, only because it condemns their passions that their hearts have corrupted their minds; that they have only a *false* and *presumptuous reason*; he excites their contempt and resentment, and overthrows what he intended to build up." *

Here we at present rest, since for most persons, it is imagined, enough has been said to show how Mr. N.'s own practice agrees with his own text, fourteen years old, and with how much justice he has made himself amenable to rules, his own pen has indited. We have no desire to pursue what Paley calls the cumulative argument. The sentiments which will pervade, not to say thrill, the bosoms of many of our readers, at the disclosures now made, will inflict on him, we fear, all we could wish, were we disposed to revenge. In his own expressive words, "a work which offends our best feelings, can have no power over the sympathies of a well-ordered mind." (pref. p. xii.) He must write with the prayers and the temper of the excellent Dr. Hody, if he would gain the sympathy of such minds for his cause. "Faxit Numen, ut vel æterno ego silentio inter non scribentes delitescam, vel semper, ut virum ingenuum, liberalis ac generosae educationis, veraeque philosophiæ studiosum decet, scribam: Veritatis unicæ indagator, absque omni styli acerbitate, mitis, urbanus, candidus, ad id, quod indecens est, adeo non pronus, ut nec movendus." †

But we have not done with this part of our subject. Mr. N. has cast his eye over the page of past ecclesiastical history, and as he has met, here and there, traces of excess and suffering, has fearlessly ascribed them to the doctrine of the Trinity. In our note, we have endeavored to cast an eye on the same page, to see how it reads, for consequences associated with professors of his own creed. Our readers must decide upon our respective surveys: but we bespeak their deliberation a little longer. We would cast an eye over later periods, and see what *their* report may sanction. And here let it be fully understood, that we are

* Phil. Dict. ii. 165. Holmes' edition, Lond. 1819.

† Hody's Prolegomena to Malela's Chronicon, 1691.

amply aware of the delicacy and sensitiveness of the subject we are approaching, and of our want of right, not to say of will, to assault the feelings of many, whom we highly respect and esteem; that we presume, *as yet*, to draw no inferences, to make no round assertions, but wish all we say, until we reach a point, which will by and by come up, considered, what we *might*, rather than what we *do*, affirm. With this, now temporary, and, in a certain case, permanent demurrer, we proceed.

Almost the whole of the offensive portion of Mr. N.'s review and book, is recorded after one seventh of a century had passed away, when the fury of polemical controversy had nearly subsided, and when no antagonist, much less a provoking one, had lashed him into rage, and turned the lenity and charity of quietude into the acerbity and venom of aggressive warfare. And yet, then,—when he was under so little temptation, to be harsh or haughty,—when the fountains of that stream of calumny, which in 1819, it was said, had been pouring out for more than eight years, and spreading poison through every possible channel,* had at least *begun* to be drying up,—when the soberness of maturer years, and the discipline of affliction, (p. 294.) might have done something, to abate the carking eagerness and fiery ferocity of a youthful champion,—what see we?—A conversion retrograde?—The stream flowing from an opposite direction?—

Once, it was the fashion of many, to utter a wail, as mournful as that of Orientals over the dead, for a denial to them of the name of Christian, and for an unwillingness to reciprocate their proffered fellowship.† By and by, a sermon *ad captandum* bursts upon the public, in which seems to be taken, the judicial stand, that claiming Divinity for Jesus Christ is denying his *real* character; and which seems, accordingly, whether expressed or left unsaid, to authorize the tremendous inference, that all who do this, must be denied by him, in the day of judgment.

Now comes a bolder herald, and proclaims such “deliriously

* Christian Disciple, 1819, p. 131.

† Vide Dr. Channing's remarks on Dr. Worcester's Letters; copies of which, we have lately by accident obtained, and read, with a silent comparison, of things from similar sources *now*, we may truly say, with an unbelieving astonishment, which nothing but “*littera scripta*” could convince.

foolish," (p. 120,) mortals, the virtual causes, of all the infidelity, on the globe:—for there is no infidelity in heathen lands, where the Gospel was never heard of. And here, it may be recollected, this charge in its heaviest form, viz: that Trinitarian systems "have counteracted the whole evidence of revelation," occurs in Mr. Norton's preface, (p. vi.) the last written portion of his book, and therefore no mean proof, of its reflex influence upon himself. At any rate, a preface shows what an author *thinks* his book will justify, for as Pascal long since said, the last thing we discover in writing a book, is to know what to put at the beginning.* —Such is the aspect of history *here*. What is it in England? When Lindsey abandoned "a corrupt Church," with an honesty, which Evanson† and others, who "had not learned the art of starving," had not the resolution to imitate, his language was the soft and respectful speech of plaintive self-justification. In time, he grew bolder, and talked, as Andrew Fuller says‡ in his letters on Socinianism, about the mental debility of his antagonists, and granted them the boon of his unfeigned commiseration. Similar, as Fuller testifies, was the case with Robert Robinson.§ During the exacerbations of Calvinism, (for he was once a Calvinist,) the severest epithet he had for Unitarians, was, "mistaken brethren." Afterward, when they were his brethren indeed, we find him denouncing a man like the great Augustine, "as a pretended saint, but an illiterate hypocrite of wicked dispositions." Even Belsham, that "calm inquirer," when Bishop Horsley becomes his theme, cannot spare the epithets "ignorant and pitiful;"|| though Mr. N. has pronounced him, a man "of various erudition," and blessed with "an unusual strength of style, and no contemptible powers of arguing."¶ Dr. Priestely, as we have hinted in a note, pronounced this escharotic theologian, a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.**

* Thoughts, p. 263, Craig's edition.

† Nichols' Lit. Anecdotes, Vol. vi. Part I. page 483.

‡ Fuller's Works, Boston edition, 1833. i. 236.

§ Fuller, i. 234.

|| Horsley's Tracts, Appendix, p. 612. 3d edition.

¶ General Repository, i. 40, 42.

** Bp. Bull fared worse than this, at an earlier date. Of him, it was said by one, in the name of all the rest, that "no respect or tenderness should be shown him by any Unitarian."—*Nelson's Life of Bull*, p. 398, 2d edition.

All this, was submitted to, by the members of a "corrupt church," who, if they had chosen, might have inflicted on calumniators, stiff enough to refuse a signature, to the short and simple formula required of dissenters, the following penalties: imprisonment without bail or mainprize, abjuration of the realm, or transportation! *—Did we cross to the Continent, we fear the story of Socinus and Blandrata and David, would be found to be *one* piece of this "coat of many colors," and that of the poor "Mummers" at Geneva, *another*. The sufferings of David, which hurried him to a dungeon and a premature grave, a Socinian biographer of Socinus, cannot shift off from *him*, as a cause, without charging them to *his party*: a gain, not worth his toil.† At Geneva, just twenty years ago, the alternative of a Socinian creed, or a refusal of ordination, (which there, as the issue showed, was a virtual banishment,) were enforced with "unmixed" resolution.‡—We go no further. And now therefore, comes up the momentous question: what use do we mean to make of these details, in the note on persecution, and the foregoing pages? Do we mean to say, that Unitarianism leads men to speak falsely, as Arius was charged with speaking about his creed,§ and that therefore, all the asseverations against Orthodoxy, are forged and groundless? No. Do we then mean to demand, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and charge as much on Unitarianism, as has been charged on Trinitarianism, and with as much vehemence? Not necessarily—not voluntarily. We are not lovers of proscription. It is an awful—a detestable weapon. We are not partial to damnatory clauses, either *in*, or *out of*, the Athanasian creed. We know not, (such frail and fallible creatures, do we think men in their best estate,) that we have the right, and we certainly have not the disposition, to ascribe *one* of all the melancholy and humiliating facts, recited or alluded to in our pages, to the particular faith, or to a particular doctrine in the faith, of any man professing and calling himself a Christian. Much rather would we say, in the true if homely language of

* Horsley's Tracts, 346, and Gibson's Codex, 589, 594.

† Harleian Miscellany, vii. 218, 219.

‡ Christian Observer, 1826. p. 688.

§ Compare Socrates' Ecc. Hist. Lib. i. Chap. 8, and Petav. Dog. Theol. tom. ii. Lib. 1. ch. 11 and 12.

our articles,* that they are all, severally, and in the aggregate, the unhappy progeny, of "the fault and corruption, of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam:" — of that "infection," which "doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated." Much rather, would we make *this* use of them, than any other: in such facts, we see an overwhelming proof, of our Savior's declaration, "verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" for how can he be fit, if unchanged, for heaven, and how can he change himself, to be fit, who has so perverted God's holiest blessings, spoiled even the religion of his spotless Son?

But if this may not be, — if the unsoftened denunciations which have been instanced, are to be reiterated, — if such sweeping inferences, such determinate applications of consequences, as we have seen, are again to be presented, with the grave, not to say solemn averment, that they are "fully believed," and are "free from all doubt and difficulty:" then, we do say, that we have as perfect a right, to declare all of an odious character, that has been recounted in connection with Unitarianism, the genuine fruit of that denomination of doctrine. Then, we do say, when we look at Lindsey, and Robinson, and Belsham, and Priestley, and the book we are reviewing, behold the effect of this doctrine upon the temper. Then, we do say, from all such doctrine "good Lord deliver us," and grant us instead, the ignorance for which we are pitied; ignorance is a hopeful malady, but there is no cure for ossification of the heart.

Again, we say, we like not proscription. The spirit of our Church, to speak nothing of our religion, is eminently pacific: we hope we have caught some of it by long familiarity. We feel, that we have no right to hurl the firebrands and arrows of damnatory clauses, and say it is necessary to do so, in order to prove true, our self-chosen creed. We believe, that we have a better, a more honorable, a more just way, of illustrating and commending that creed, which before heaven we believe to be true. We are ready to say, of every rude assailant, no matter how able, what Cyprian said of Novatus, "*facundiæ venenatæ*,

* Article IX.

jacula contorquens, magis durus, secularis philosophiæ pravitate, quam philosophiæ Dominicæ, lenitate pacificus: misericordiæ hostis — interfector penitentiæ — doctor superbiæ — veritatis corruptor — perditor caritatis.”* We presume to take no higher ground, than Mr. Gray would allow us, in the letter already quoted.† We *believe* that we are right: believe so, from the bottom of our hearts. We *believe*, that the notions of Unitarians, “are repugnant to the Scriptures.” To say that we *know* this is more than we adventure. We dare not say, we *cannot* be wrong. We dare not say, they *cannot* be right. We *believe*: we express our belief, plainly, fully, unshrinkingly, — not daunted by the face of any mortal man. This belief is with us, a most precious and sacred thing. The scorn, of the self-named “intelligent,” shall not make us blush for it. The frowning dogmatism of “the aristocracy of literature,” shall not brow-beat us into silence on it. Nay, (as we hope for strength from heaven,) the gleaming fires of persecution shall not burn it out of us. Still, properly alive to the subject of human fallibility, we only say that we *believe*, and there we rest. *Decision*, belongs to God. To him we reverentially refer it, and wait with humble hope and silent patience the disclosures of a future day, — a day of UNCLOUDED LIGHT.

But if while we do thus, — if while we assume dominion over no man’s faith,‡ and by the views we give him of our own, would only be helpers of his joy, our unaggressive attitude is to be no safe-guard; but our most valued doctrines, are to be dashed to the ground, with the imperious and unqualified *dictum*, not merely that they “are repugnant to the Scriptures,” but such “revolting absurdities,” that “not one,” of even the wisest and holiest among us, has an intelligent belief in them; if we are to see these doctrines held forth for a hissing and a bye-word, as provocative of crimes, which, if charged on us as *individuals*, would justify an indictment, to bring him who would proclaim

* Cypriani Opera, edition 1550, p. 37.

† Perhaps not altogether. He says, no man has a right to say, his creed is *in the abstract* right. This we admit. He then goes on to say, that one creed is right for one, and another for another. This is contradicting his own position, and (with due deference) is more than he, or than any human being *knows*.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 24.

us guilty of them, before the tribunals of his country; then, we think, we are perfectly authorized to offer appeals like the following. — Let the community awake to the consequences, of granting a toleration, to which intolerance will be the unfailing requital. Let them mark those, who make longer and more sonorous clamors than any, about the illiberality and bigotry and persecuting hostility, of their neighbors. Let them consider, whether this is attempted with a proselyting aim, to excite that sympathy, which, to the honor of human nature, is involuntarily bestowed on oppression. Let them weigh well, whether this din, is to drown “the clink of hammers,” which are forging armor of higher proof, and for belligerents, who may come forth like another Thundering Legion, and crush opposition at a blow. And if they shall think, as we fear they will have too much reason to do, that *intolerant toleration* is acting this dangerous part, then we say, let them be lulled no more, by the deceitful outcry of persecution and domination.* Let them no longer be beguiled into a charity, which meets no recompense. Let them no longer be mocked, by promises of a disenthraling liberality, which, like the apocalyptic book, are sweet to the taste but bitter of digestion. Let them remember, that the high authority of Sacred Writ has taught us, that “false apostles” can assume the guise of “angels of light:”† that the history of human nature has taught us, that even Atheism, which declares we are responsible for no opinion whatever, and which therefore grants unbounded license, of thought and word and action, that even this, all-denying, all-liberating creed, which at first, smiles on us like one of the Graces, can at length, rage and howl and ravage, like one of the unearthly Furies.‡

And then, at last, we say, let them beware of systems, which in the days of their feebleness, have “words snooter than butter,” but in the days of their maturity, when they can act the

* When faction or ambition, had conceived the design of a revolution, we almost uniformly find, that they commenced the plan of its execution, by the outcry against abuses, and vociferations against tyranny.

Dr. Fletcher on Rel. controversy, p. 207.

† 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.

‡ Note F.

potential mood from the "curule chair," clothe themselves in "Gorgon terrors," and give laws like Draco.

II.—The second proposition, about which we offered to say something, in relation to Mr. N.'s "Statement," was, that it might possibly be shown to be *less able*, as well as *less wise*, than some or many may have imagined. — He seems to write e. g. as if he had made *new discoveries*, in the science of Interpretation. Let us canvass his claim, in this respect.

In the review of 1819, in opening the trenches on Mr. Stuart, he appears to have found it convenient to attack with wholesale allegation. Mr. Stuart's is a book, which, to have been answered, as fully as it *was meant to be*, ought to have been examined in detail. It is a work, chiefly of *instances of criticism*, and such a work, cannot be contemplated at one view, like a system of moral philosophy or of political economy. The easier and more ostentatious way, to disparage without meeting it, is, to try the virtue of comprehensive declamation. To us, this appears to have been relied on. Mr. Stuart's principles of Interpretation, were assaulted *en masse*, to be carried by storm, and after a summary condemnation of them, it was hastily but conclusively inferred, that any one, who could profess and maintain such principles, (the same for substance be it remembered, which Dr. Channing had avowed and advocated,*) could have, but "*extremely loose and inconsistent notions concerning interpretation*," — in fine, that he could have "no settled principles," at all.† The real and only just ground of censure, which the review could plausibly urge, was, that Mr. S. had not given, a *formal synopsis* of his principles. But what need of this, for those who had made Dr. C.'s Sermon, their horn-book; unless their minds were as much beclouded, as those of the slaves, to a creed of "heartless, revolting, debasing absurdities?"

Mr. N. then brings forward, his *own* views of interpretation, which, with the "certainty" of Socinus, the "much spirit and full assurance" of Arius, and the "slight for the mean learning of others," of Francken, are, propounded as original, irreproachable, and overcoming. Like the Roman Catholic, Bishop Milner's book, they bear on their very front the annihilating appellation,

* Stuart's Letters to Dr. Channing, *first* edition, p. 7,—the edition reviewed in the Disciple.

† Christian Disciple, New Series, 1. 319.

"the end of controversy." — Of course, we draw nigh, in the attitude of anxious wonder, to witness the marvellous discovery. But we behold, — what? Not "fair Portia's counterfeit" — that's certain. No: but we are quite persuaded, merely "divinity of other days ground down to modern use," — "things old," tricked off in the paraphernalia of present fashion, like too much, which makes the uninitiated stare, in our "Libraries of useful knowledge."* — *The intrinsic ambiguity of language*, is the astounding novelty, which is to show us, what dull vision we all have had, and for ages, and to fill us with confusion, before the grand and final issues, to which, on topics of theology, it is to be made to lead. The ambiguity of language? Why, it has not even the credit, of *verbal* originality. The very word ambiguity, in relation to the same subject, is found on the pages of Ernesti, and even on those of old Pfeiffer, "now to the dust gone down;" while, as to the *causes* of this ambiguity, when Mr. N. enumerates but four or five, Morus, the commentator on Ernesti, enumerates one principal, and five subsidiary.† — Franck, in his hermeneutical lectures, lays down six positions, all of which, are grounded upon this supposed newly discovered quality of language. Keil, in his work on interpretation, suggests five rules, to which constant respect is to be paid, for this very reason: the same number, which is given by the learned Blackstone, in his well known Commentaries. Jahn, in his valuable Enchiridion, says, (remembering perhaps what Jerome had long before said,) that words, in themselves considered, have *no peculiar sense*, they have this, only when regarded in their connections and relations:‡ a sentiment to which the phrase "intrinsic ambiguity of language," comes near enough to be an echo. Morus, has written ably on the important distinction between the signification and sense of words, and his dissertation, (part of which Mr. Stuart himself had already

* Some by old words, to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense.
Such labored nothings, in so strange a style,
Amaze the unlearned and make the learned smile.

Pope's Essay on Criticism, 324—28.

† Mori Hermeneut, Vol. 1. 44—46.

‡ Jahn Ench. p. 22. compare Harris' Hermes, 328, 9.

translated in his edition of Ernesti,) may be found in an English dress, in the Jan. number of Dr. Robinson's excellent periodical, the Biblical Repository. Any one, who had read or heard of Bishop Marsh's fourteenth, and fifteenth Lectures, would not be apt to forget, that the manifold meanings of words, constitute one of the chief difficulties an interpreter must vanquish. Indeed, this is a subject, by no means forgotten by a body of men, whom it is one of the fashions of this age of reform, to undervalue:— we mean the translators of James's Bible. In their erudite preface, (which it would at least be decorous for our tyros to *read*, before they presume to ridicule them,) they say, that though as Chrysostom observes, "*whatsoever things are necessary are manifest*," — "yet for all that, it cannot be dissembled, that partly to exercise and whet our wits, — partly to wean the curious from loathing of them for their every where plainness, partly also to stir up our devotion to crave the assistance of God's Spirit, that we might be forward to seek aid of our brethren by conference, and never scorn those, that be not in all respects so complete as they should be, being to seek in many things ourselves, it hath pleased God in his Divine Providence, here and there, to scatter words and sentences of difficulty and doubtfulness." And yet, they ask a little further on: "Is the kingdom of God become words and syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them if we may be free?" In truth, we think we have rarely seen, in the history of sacred criticism, a finer illustration of independence tempered with modesty, of a true zeal for liberal inquiry, combined with a just consciousness of the limits of research, than in these, (to the dishonor of our age must it be spoken,) most unestimated men. — But not to quote from Bishop Gleig, Dr. Campbell, William Carpenter, and other writers, professedly theological, — we think there are authors, in quite different departments of learning, not very much more ignorant of the ambiguity of language, than Mr. Norton himself. Lyttelton, we suspect, knew something about it, when he talked of "giving truth its due force, and scorning an embroidered lie."* Johnson, we imagine, did not think Swift unacquainted with it, when he quoted him as saying, "A farmer will tell you in two words, he has broken

* Letters, p. 211.

his leg, but a surgeon after a long discourse, shall leave you as ignorant as you were before.”* Addison, must have dreamt of it, in his essay on Ancient and Modern Learning, when he undertook to tell, why we could in general so poorly appreciate the wit of antiquity; and, in sooth, we profoundly query, whether there was ever a punster,† or a plagiarist,‡ who had not some insight of this mysterious subject. John Locke, in his great work on the mind, has a chapter on the imperfections of words, another on the abuse of words, and another on the remedies of the foregoing imperfections and abuses, which ought not to be wholly strange to one, who graduated from College in times not exceedingly olden, though they might be unknown to a stripling of the present era, for whom Locke is too antiquated to be a text-book. Dugald Stuart however, who is nearer the *bon ton* of literature, has not let the ambiguity of language pass by him, without careful comment. In his *Elements of Philosophy*,§ he regrets the difficulties in which he is involved, by the “vagueness and ambiguity of words,” and says he has had *frequent occasion* to do the very same thing. Sir James Mackintosh, laments with feeling “the penury and laxity of language,” even in relation to *ethical* subjects: subjects of which the Bible is full.¶ The “heretic” Tucker, alludes to the same deficiency in language, quite as emphatically, if he does not lament it.¶ And finally, to wind up this series of theological and un-theological writers, we will quote the apt and sagacious remark, of the translator of Tittman’s synonymes of the New Testament. “It is easy,” he says, “for *perverted intellect* or *unsound scholarship*, to assume this ambiguity, and build on it a false and ruinous dogma, and in fact, this is the fruitful source of most heretical opinions.”** — Here we intended to have paused, but the sound of a word, has started a new association with us, as it did with Goldsmith when writing his “Traveller.”— We cannot refrain from observing, that

* Idler, No. 70.

† Compare Barrow on Wit, Vol. i. Serm. 14.

‡ Curiosities of Literature, ii. 152.

§ Vol. ii. p. 2. edition 1814. So also Dr. Reid, W’ks 2. 1.

¶ Introduct. View of Phil. p. 3.

¶ Light of Nature, iii. 260. Camb. edition.

** Biblical Cabinet, No. iii. p. 24.

ecclesiastical history will abundantly show, that the ambiguity of language, is a thing as long known and well known, as heresy itself.

Paul of Samosata, was such an adept in this slippery subject, that says Mosheim, "repeated ecclesiastical councils were wholly unable to convict him."* Arius, says Lardner quoting from Theodoret, was intrusted with the interpretation of Scripture.† From the frequent and reiterated charges made against him, one would think, that the ambiguity of language, was a branch in his professional art, for which *he*, (and as our note will show, *his*,) had a sort of instinctive gust.‡ Yet Le Clerc, strenuously defended himself from a charge, of accusing the Fathers generally, of being more notorious than was reputable for the same humor of palate.§ — Really, when we think of these and some similar things, with references to which our page might be dotted, we feel quite disposed to yield Mr. Norton the palm, and allow him to say, without one plea for abatement on our side, that the ambiguity of language, is a matter, about which the Orthodox part of the Church has ever been uncommonly ignorant. We are not anxious to trace our lineage from "the Sons of the Mist."

But to proceed. After supplying us with his *new discovery*, Mr. N. goes on to show, the incomparable effects of its application.

Here, unless warned by experience, we might again listen *auribus arrectis*. And how great would be our reward? This "intrinsic ambiguity," is to guide, prompt, and enable us to do, — what? It is to assist us, "by directing our attention, to all those considerations, which render it probable, that one meaning was intended by the writer, rather than another." (p. 29.) With this, "new thing under the sun," let any man of discernment compare the definition of Ernesti, that interpretation is the art of teaching the real sentiment, contained in any form of words, or aiding us to derive from them, the same idea the writer intended to convey.¶ That Mr. N. may have ample competition, with dis-

* Murdock's edition, i. p. 244.

† Works, 4to. edition, 2. 304. also Ceillier Hist. Aut. Sac. iv. 19.

‡ Note G.

§ Ars Critica, vol. iii. p. 83.

¶ Institutio Prolegom. Sec. 3.

ciples of the school he wars with, we subjoin the excellent definition of Prof. Hahn, translated literally :—"That, is the true interpretation of the Scriptures, through which, that sense of them is spread out before one, which the writers of the Scriptures, wished and intended, to spread out before him."* We now leave him, to dispute the wreath for either originality or superior excellence, as long and as loudly as he will. Only, we do so, with the expression of our deep regret, that any man should speak of the ambiguity of language, with an air of triumph, as if his system could not but be advantaged by it. We have always supposed, it was to be *lamented* and not *rejoiced in*. We remember the melancholy uses, to which some, with the air and manner of reformers, have applied it. In the language of a powerful writer on the study of the Law,—“They have robbed their own minds of a resting place, and they would reduce the minds of others, to the same unhappy and unsettled condition. With this spirit, they attack every sentiment, whereon men have been accustomed to rely : and as words, are the common medium through which ideas are delivered, they play upon the meanings of words, till they have thrown everything into that confusion, which unfortunately for themselves and for others, is so congenial with their debased inclinations.”†

Our readers, will perceive at once, we are not covetous of triumph, in a matter of logomachy. But were we really disposed to enter the lists, and tilt in serious strife with confident pretenders, we should tell them in the outset, that not a few have wholly overlooked or strangely forgotten, a consideration of even greater importance than ambiguity of language, viz.: THE MORAL QUALIFICATIONS OF AN INTERPRETER. With an acute head, a man may have a very dull heart, and mistake egregiously, even about things otherwise the plainest in the Scriptures:—about those especially, with which his heart has had little concern, in which it has felt no deep and abiding interest,—by which its best and warmest sympathies have not been excited. In the very words of Mr. Norton, in relation to his “intrinsic ambiguity,” would we expressively say, “this fundamental truth, this fact

* Biblical Repository, i. 124.

† Letters on the Study of the Law, p. 306.

which lies at the very bottom of the art of interpretation, has either been overlooked, or not regarded in its relations and consequences." (p. 91.) The Bible itself tells us, that "the natural man, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are *foolishness* unto him, neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1. Cor. ii. 14.) "Why do ye not understand my speech?" said Christ to the Pharisees, who regarded his language as *ambiguous*: "even because ye cannot hear my word," was his own infallible solution of the difficulty. (John viii. 43.) How came Ezra, to have such an enlarged and correct acquaintance, with the law of the Lord? Because he *prepared his heart* to seek it, (Ezra vii. 10.) and as the intense original might prove, made no little serious exertion to procure the appropriate habitude for such an undertaking.*

"Before we come to study," says one of the most pithy works on practical piety, with which we are familiar, "we must be willing to learn, and we might say to Christians, who desire to be instructed in their religion, what a certain philosopher said to his disciples, *Before you come to my school forget what you have learned in that of others.*"† "When the Divine apostle," says Leighton, "preached in the Areopagus at Athens, a great many mocked and ridiculed him; others said, 'We will hear thee again of this matter: but certain clave unto him and believed.' And that we may not think, that this faith in those who believed, was owing to their uncommon penetration or sagacity, on the one hand, or to their weakness and simplicity, on the other, of the two mentioned in Scripture who believed on that occasion, the one was a philosopher, and the other a woman."‡

Lest however, such authorities should not be *sufficiently philosophical*, some others shall be annexed. The following from one of the old French *Savans*, the *Sieur de Charron*, is well worthy notice. "Things," says he, "have just that place in our opinion

* The word translated "prepared," is that used to designate, the patience, care and solicitude, with which an archer makes ready his bow, and discharges his arrows. So Ezra "pressed towards the mark."

† De Villiers on Prejudice against Religion, p. 68. London, 1709. As a co-ordinate with this, we add the inscription, on the gate of the temple of Epidaurus; "Entrance into these places, is permitted only to *pure souls.*"—*Clemens Alex. Stromata*. Lib. 5. p. 652.

‡ Works, Vol. iv. p. 216.

and esteem, which we think fit to assign them. They are relished, just as our palate stands at the time, and appear to us, with those colors with which we ourselves have tintured them. Like the eyes of men in the jaundice, or the prisms, that refract and vary the rays that fall upon the organs of our outward senses, so does the soul, alter its objects too, and the present constitution of it, (i. e. state at the time,) is the medium, through which they must pass to us.”* We will add but two more. They shall be from two of the greatest lawyers, whom the world has ever seen; and lawyers know, *ab ovo usque ad malum*, all the circumstances which may affect a man’s appetite, for the viands of truth or error. Says Lord Bacon, in ratification of St. Paul, (1. Tim. i. 8.) The law is good, *only* in the hands of him who uses it lawfully, and he therefore warns judges about a wise use and application of laws.† Well therefore may we, though with a far humbler voice, warn all, how they use the laws of interpretation. Says Jeremy Bentham, in the abstract of his great work on Evidence by Dumont; “Partiality, can influence attention. He who is under the influence of a bias, — a *predetermined notion*, will regard that only which flatters him, — will see that only which he wishes to see, and that which has an unpleasant sense or aspect, will escape him. Thus the Jews, opposed a vulgar proverb to all which could be urged by Christ, — ‘can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’‡ What an unsuspected application might be made of this high judicial authority, to some modern expositors of Scripture!

Here we leave this subject, which needs a book, and a very earnest and solemn one written on it, for the express use of theologians of our day. In dropping it, we improve the opportunity, to commend the additions, which in regard to it, the judicious Dr. Henderson has made to the English Edition of Stuart’s *Ernesti*, — Prof. Lee’s *Six Sermons on the Study &c. of Scripture*, — Dr. Reid’s Chapter on *Prejudices the Causes of Error*,§ — Dewar’s Chapter in his *Moral Philosophy*, on the moral qualifications

* Charron on Wisdom, Vol. i. p. 161, 2. 2d edition, 1707.

† Works. Montague’s edition, i. 184.

‡ *Traité des preuves judiciaires*, Vol. i. p. 47.

§ Reid’s Works, iii. 233.

necessary for pursuing that great subject to advantage, and especially, the sober and solid, but unfortunately little known work, of Bp. Van Mildert, on the Interpretation of Scripture viz., his Bampton Lectures. Bp. Van Mildert has never had sufficient justice done him, as a critical scholar: if he had had, as well as some others, we should have heard less of the exclusive praises of Germany, in the department of Sacred Literature.*

Enough then, of Mr. Norton's claim to discoveries in the science of Interpretation: — whom are his discoveries to benefit? Like all other grand principles or facts, on which this noble science is founded, are they to be of *general* use and application? Are they to be equally serviceable, to all sects, all professions? Are they to be sovereignly impartial, and favor no one systematizer, more than they do another? — Not at all, — not at all. Mr. N. doles out the power of interpreting, as frugally as he does common perception and common honesty, to Trinitarians corrupted by a creed, of "heartless, revolting, debasing absurdities." Let Orthodox students open the Bible, and attempt to peruse and understand it, and there is nothing intelligible upon its pages, which a keen reason can discern. It is a perfect blank, or like Ovid's *rudis indigestaque moles*, a confusion worse confounded. They are not to be permitted, even TO FANCY *that they believe*, what their unfortunate eyes may see there. (p. 121 at bottom, 122 at top.) Whatever be the true signification of the Bible, its Trinitarian exposition *must be false*. (p. 105.) Let one, however, gifted with Mr. Norton's *second sight*, approach it, and like the magician with sympathetic inks, he brings out vivid colors, through which "there is a prospect displayed before us, inconceivably glorious and delightful." (p. 291.) True, we have the advantage of numbers on our side: our doctrine embraces nearly all of nominal Christendom (p. 287.) But what then? Daniel, was but one, against a host of the astrologers and soothsayers of Chaldea, (the *orthodox* interpreters of the land,) and yet he perfectly comprehended the hieroglyphics, which put them all at bay, "and showed the king the interpretation."

This, most undeniably, is a new discovery. The man who has found a master-key, to unlock the mysteries of language,

* Note H.

while his fellows have been conjuring for it, and for centuries in vain, does indeed merit *ex abundanti*, both of homage and of praise. Bacon's name and his, should be enrolled on the same tablet, their statues, fill the same niche in "Fame's proud temple." But we find an obstacle rising, to hinder the immediate award, of such high celebrity. The science of Interpretation, we have always supposed, was founded upon the best settled convictions, of *common sense*, and *facts*, of the most constant and notorious observation. If there be any science therefore, which offered less temptation than another, to an explorer, we should suppose it would be this: if any, which could not be made to bend, to the views and whims and prejudices of a particular individual or clan, we should name this, as among the foremost of such a character. The same fountain, sends not forth sweet water for the white, and bitter water for the red man. And the same system of principles, which the common sense of all, and the constant observation of all, found, support, and sanction, cannot help one man, to all the lights and purities of truth, and plunge another, with eyes and mind and heart at least as good, into all the gloom and depravity of error. No: Interpretation is based and built, as the Common Law is, and hence, a man whose natural powers are fair, and whose experience considerable, will, (without naming any of its principles,) reason upon them as correctly, or even more so, than the mere student equipped *cap a pie* in technicalities.* Like the man, whom Lord Mansfield advised to accept the office of puisne judge, and decide fearlessly, but *never give his reasons*, and who did so to great acceptance: so he, with a *right heart*, will determine the signification of a book like the Bible, written in popular language, without those palpable and gross mistakes, which to Mr. N. supposes all liable, if not actually guilty of them, who are not directed by his wonder-working rules.† "Study alone, will not make a great man, nor a knowledge of the sciences, a philosopher: but we live in an age, when great words impose, and when men think themselves eminent geniuses, if they only contrive a set of singular opinions."‡

* "For all a rhetorician's rules,

Teach nothing, but to name his tools."—*Hudibras*.

† Note I.

‡ Ganganelli's Letters, 1. 178.

Well, has the discerning Smith said, in his *Select Discourses*; (3d edit. p. 184.) "The best way to understand the true sense and meaning of Scripture, is, not rigidly to examine it upon philosophical interrogatories, or to bring it under the scrutiny, of school definitions and distinctions. It speaks not to us, so much in the tongue of the learned sophies of the world, as in the plainest and most vulgar, (i. e. common; — he wrote about 1650,) dialect that may be." To this inherent quality of Scripture, which is the secret of its accessibleness to the community at large, do we refer the grand and abiding fact, of that general and consentaneous admission of orthodox doctrine, which can be traced by a broad path-way, through every century, up to the birth-time of our religion. Does Mr. N. assign for this striking circumstance, *another* cause? Let him do it, at the peril of his system. He and his party, beshrew the Orthodox, for insulting and degrading human nature. *They*, would glorify, nay even "reverence" it.* Man is not, the miserable and feeble sinner, which we make him. He is a being, of inherent powers, perceptions, purposes, and aims, for knowledge and for virtue, and especially for truth. He is not, "gold become dim," but is all over, as Dr. Channing says, "radiant with the signatures of an Infinite Spirit."† With these exalted conceptions, whose only fault (for we heartily wish them true) is their possessing a character, we once heard a Unitarian ascribe to a most solid and fervent sermon by one of our best preachers, (the character of romance,) — let him show how it is, that men, those *exceedingly good and able beings*, have been made to cringe for eighteen hundred years, (for fifteen hundred at least, the sturdiest must say,) to the enslavement of Trinitarianism, and only here and there, a "few but undismayed," in all that protracted period, and even now but a scattered few, — *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, — had the sense and the courage, to throw off their shackles, think aright, and maintain their faith with confidence. With his view of human dignity and energy, may all this be? *Credat Judæus Apella.*

Under the influence of interest, says the acute Lawyer, whom

* Channing's Works, 1st edition, 475, 481.

† Election Sermon, p. 8.

we have quoted once before, — under the influence of *interest*, the natural incredibility of a fact, so far from being a reason for rejecting it, is often a reason for admitting it.* But pray, what *interest* can *we* have, (especially on this republican soil where dignities are scarce,) in believing a doctrine so incredible as the Trinity; when, if we will only disbelieve it, we may rise from among the ignoble vulgar, whose whole knowledge is "*tanta colluvies*," (p. 287.) to the exalted rank of "the aristocracy of literature," whose intercourse will at once "free us from essential error," and beatify us with "ennobling and operative conceptions of Christianity." (p. 88.) And can we believe "a creed, formed in a delirium of folly," (p. 120.) and mistake this interest, when we are all over "radiant with the signatures of an Infinite Spirit?" when we would fain, learn of "honorable men"? *Incredibilis incredibilitas!* We can swallow this, no better than the sage old Cudworth, said some "beggars" of his day could swallow the doctrine of the Trinity: it being to them "the very choke-pear of Christianity."†

We must retract therefore, something of that eulogy which was mounting to our lips, and which has been again and again restrained. Yes, for when our eyes are open a little wider, we see nothing in all this arrogating the exclusive benefit of the principles of interpretation, but a part of the same indomitable avarice, which would monopolize the exclusive benefit of the right of private judgment. The right of private judgment! Of the puling jargon of the day on this topic, we have heard till our ears have sickened. Just as if no class of men, and especially under such a government as ours, which allows all to believe as much or as little as they please, possessed this precious right, but a few hyper-eulogists of its immunities and joys.‡ But it is too much so. We are the people, we are the people, is the strain they continually pipe, and with us, wisdom no doubt shall die. They talk in the spirit, and partly in the letter of Julian's language to the Galileans, i. e. the Christians whom he so styled contemptuously: "It belongs to us to discourse, it belongs to us to understand the Greek

* Dumont Preuves judiciaires, ii. 252.

† And yet for all this, Cudworth is claimed as a Unitarian!

‡ Note K.

tongue, as it belongs to us to adore the Gods; but as for you, ignorance and barbarism are your portion, and all your wisdom consists in saying, I believe."* They are, (so good old Hilary ironically called them in days of yore, —Ep. ad Constantium,) they are the unravellers of the secrets of heaven. They are exclusively, as the Arian Hunneric said of his own party, *veri Divinæ Majestatis cultores*.† "They are not ashamed to adopt a style of speaking, as if they thought themselves morning stars on the verge of the dark ages, destined to usher in the splendors of true philosophy upon a benighted world."‡ Do others, claim the privilege of thinking for themselves? Strange pretension! "Singular" presumption! They have not the capacity to enjoy the right, or the sincerity to employ it honestly, and therefore it must be wrested from them. *Aut Cæsar, aut nullus*, our faith or nothing is the watch-word. The text of honest Burton, would hardly be too strong for them; "We brag and vendicate, our own works, our wisdom, our learning, — all our geese are swans, and we as basely esteem and vilifie other men's, as we do over-highly prize and value our own. We will not suffer them to be in *secundis*, no, not in *tertiis*. What! *mecum confertur Ulysses*? They are *mures*, *muscæ*, *culices*, *præ se*, nitts and flies, compared to his inexorable and supercilious, eminent and arrogant worship, though indeed they be far from him."§ "Omnes," exclaims Tertullian, "omnes tument, omnes scientiam pollicentur. Ante sunt perfecti catechumeni, quam edocti. Ipsæ mulieres, hereticæ quam procaces."|| The rights of conscience, are hardly granted us with the amusing courtesy of Cromwell, who, when he once arrested a monk for celebrating mass, and the poor man pleaded his right to follow the dictates of his conscience, answered, that the general interfered with no man's conscience, but as for the mummery of

* Du Pin. cent. 4. p. 163. Tillemont. vii. 346.

† Gibbon iv. 401. Phila. edition. 1804.

‡ Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm p. 94.

§ Burton's Anat. of Melancholy. i. 178.

|| Tertullian De Pr. Haer. cap. xli. 111. 213.—

Was it the perusal of Tertullian, which made a distinguished preacher and scholar of our day once say in the pulpit, "Girls with their samplers in their hands dispute about the doctrine of the Trinity"?

the mass, it was to be exterminated by law of Parliament. Fortunately, they have not the power of Cromwell, or we might fare as roughly in their manipulation, as others did from that of the Arians in the fifth century, "who did not combat by argument, but by force, and brought their adversaries to silence, not by reasoning with them, but by *cutting out their tongues*"!!*

Is this, in view of the example protruded on us, "plain," speaking? Let the treatment of such men, as Mr. Stuart, and Dr. Chalmers, justify it. The former, has studied and commented on Ernesti; whom most men of discernment, will pronounce at least equal to Le Clerc, in his *Ars Critica*, "a divine, conspicuous among those who have contended for the right of private judgment, and who at the same time, dogmatize very freely in the use of their own."† The latter, *never* handled language like a tyro. But all this will not answer for a single instant. Language, is "*intrinsically ambiguous*," and both, speak of grammatical analysis, in such terms, that the former, is said in his own understanding of the tribute awarded him, "to have loose and inconsistent ideas of exegesis, or no ideas of it at all;" and the latter, with one of those fell swoops of his terrific pen, by which Mr. N. "demolishes"‡ an adversary, is doomed beyond all hope, to THOROUGH IGNORANCE. (p. 98.)

Ought such dauntless proscription, such piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, to expect, and still more to demand a complaisance, to which it is *thoroughly* a stranger?

Language is "*intrinsically ambiguous*." Pray, cannot Mr. S. and Dr. Chalmers have the benefit of this position? No. Their assertions are to be taken *literally*.

But what is easier, than to tear and mangle the assertions of a very sensible man, and hold them up, when ragged and dis-

* Michaelis Int. N. Test. vi. 428. 2d. edition.

† Lond. Encyc. part 11. p. 1. Le Clerc, says Gibbon, "reduces the reason or folly of ages to the standard of his private judgment, and his impartiality, is sometimes quickened, and sometimes tainted, by his opposition to the Fathers." Dec. and Fall. vi. 2. note.

‡ We quote this word, for it seems to be a classic usage, on his side of the house. A book was written in 1767, with this title, 'The true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ, wherein the Trinity is *demolished* forever.' See, Pillars of Priestcraft and Orthodoxy shaken. iv. 22.

jointed, to scorn and ridicule? This has been done, in the review of 1819, and then and there as say the lawyers, Mr. S. declared a mere sciolist, in one of the principal branches of his profession.

Dr. Chalmers, in his essay on the Evidences, which forms the article on Christianity in the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, is combatting near the close of it, those who come to the Bible, with systems, as tools, to shape it to their liking. In his effort to make a strong impression, he lets fall the sentiment, that a man must rather come to it, with his lexicon and grammar.* But is this "intrinsically ambiguous" declaration, not qualified? In the sentences preceding, when he said, that our business with the Bible, was not one of fancy or speculation, and in the sentences following, where he speaks of authorities for the import and significance of phrases, of patient and profound philology, we see the proper shade of signification, which is to be given to his vituperated words. And we see enough, it is thought, to bring a blush upon the cheek of a man, who, after hackneying the phrase "ambiguity of language," clings to a mere isolated line, and on that shadow of a shade of testimony, condemns one of the first theologians and philosophers of the age, for "thorough ignorance."

He hides behind a magisterial air,
His own offences, and strips others bare.

Cowper's Charity.

We shall presume to commend to Mr. N.'s perusal, the essay of Huet bishop of Avranches, *de optimo genere interpretandi*; who, Catholic if he were, was a scholar and a gentleman, and not untaught in human nature, at least as it is exhibited at times in those, who assume the high function, of divining the thoughts of others. The following accurate delineation of Huet, respecting licentiousness in interpreting, is particularly worthy his attention. "Dum enim, de se, bene existimat interpretes, et nimium sibi placet, iudicis sibi facile arrogat partes, de que auc-

* Dr. Priestley we suspect, would have approved of this. He upbraids the clergy of the establishment, for availing themselves of "the ambiguity of language," and not adhering to the *obvious literal and grammatical* sense of it. — *Familiar Letters*, p. 123.

tore, ad quem convertendum accesserat, confidenter arbitrium facit. Quæcumque ergo sibi non sapiunt, respuit, pro que iis sua supponit; si quæ veró etiam, puncto ipsius, comprobata sunt, eo tantum omine retinentur, si ita interpreti fuerit visum; qui mentis suæ fœtus, in alienum nidum, serpere, et legitimos, sæpe exigere patitur." (De opt. &c. p. 17.) The latter part of this, is so expressive, that we cannot help converting it into English, for the benefit of less learned readers. "Every thing, which some interpreters do not savor in an author, they reject; substituting their own notions in its stead. Do they find any thing in him however, agreeable to their own taste, they ask no better reason, for approving and retaining it. Thus, do some venture to thrust the offspring of their own brain into another's nest, and to drive out the lawful nestlings. —

Says Cicero, (De Nat. Deor. L. i. §. 1.) what rashness so unworthy the gravity and stability of a philosopher, as to conceive wrongly or to defend absolutely, what he has not thoroughly examined and does not clearly comprehend? In sober truth, when we review the conduct of Mr. Norton, under the guidance of his own clue, for threading one's way through the Cretan labyrinth of language, we see a deplorable and glaring inconsistency. His principles are good. We should "find no fault in him," had he the politeness to say, they differed only in their costume, the form of their expression, from those of mighty minds, who have long and well taught us how to unravel the intricacies of speech in all its windings. But he will have no competitor. All before him, have interpreted upon no general principles, at least upon none which CAN BE *defended*. (p. 88.) Oh! to what "a lower deep," in the depth of desperation, must a poor man's cause have sunken, when to say a word even in its *defence*, is an utter impossibility! — With such an impracticable writer, such an anti-republican devotee of the statute of lese-majesty, what can we do? Clearly, he is one who mistakes his pen for the caestus of Entellus, which was heavy enough to knock an ox down: — one with whom moderation would be out of place, and looked upon, with the contempt of Roche Foucault, who pronounced it synonymous with sloth or languor. Therefore we feel obliged to meet him, with allegations as broad as his own, and say that he has

utterly failed to sustain his pretensions, in the very science he has professed to teach ; — nay more, that he has failed to show us conduct, in tolerable keeping with his own positions. — Nothing “can be” clearer, than that his views of interpretation, in themselves considered, do not prove true, Unitarianism or any other *ism* whatever, but to imitate his own language, (p. 23.) where he says, “there are men who seem unable to comprehend the possibility, that the doctrines of their sect, may make no part of the Christian revelation,” we may as vigorously say, there are men, who seem unable to imagine, that the rules of interpretation, can be employed to any purpose, by any, but themselves. Apply these rules to the Bible. They cannot conceive it supposable, that any result but one, will follow ; and that, the one which would be agreeable to them.* They remind us of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who wrote to supplant revelation and prove it needless, and yet, believed that heaven made a revelation to himself!† Of Hume, also, who after a pompous introduction and elaborate sophisms, to prove the impossibility of miracles, in a self-forgetful moment, has the folly and the impudence to say, there may be miracles, yet no one “can ever be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion!” For this, we are happy to observe, even a lawyer, without making one pretence to pious motives, has given him a most abrading castigation, confessing himself in a tone of gentle irony, unable to perceive “how a fact proved to be true, is not true for all purposes to which it is relevant.”‡ We fear if Mr. N.’s practice under his own theory, were prescribed for by one of this excoriating profession, who sometimes blister a man for “travelling out of the record,” he would be treated *secundum artem*.

We hope Mr. N.’s dread of grammatical interpretation, was not caught in the company of Dr. Priestley, who once undertook to manage it to his sore discomfiture, and was advised by Bishop Horsley who “bound up his wounds,” to beware how he again handled “the briars of criticism.”§ We are not over-anxious to

* Note. L.

† Herbert’s Auto-biog. p. 172. Edition 1792.

‡ Starkie on Evidence, Am. Edition i. p. 476.

§ Tracts, 3d edition, p. 223.

tax him with that ignorance, which he, though "no zealot, no partizan of a sect, no disturber of social intercourse by a spirit of proselytism," (pref. p. xxxiii.) yet sees infecting like contagion, all who are so unphilosophical, as in defiance of "a literary aristocracy," to believe in the Trinity and other Orthodox and obsolete doctrines. We are fain to look, therefore, for some *other* cause of his practical inconsistency. And after due examination, we fear it is neither more nor less, than the indulgence of those *preconceptions*, against which Dr. Chalmers eloquently inveighs, and for his smarting truth in doing so, is perhaps rewarded with the epithet of "consummate ignoramus."

For to us, it is palpably evident, that he *begins*, with a *petitio principii*, and not only so, but an invidious one. He does not expect, to give a single new conviction, to the great body of *enlightened* men. (pref. p. xxviii.) Like Jerome, in his fastidious moments, he suspects some latent poison in all Trinitarian phraseology.* He therefore attaches *his own* meaning to words on which the whole controversy turns, and then, by ringing a score or two of changes, upon his begged definitions, thinks he has as often demonstrated the fallacy and absurdity of the Trinitarian creed.† In direct contravention to the canon of Mr. Grey, that we have no right to decide that any man's opinions are repugnant to the Scriptures, Mr. N. comes to the Bible, with *fixed notions*, "gotten by prolepsis" as Cudworth says, about some of the most recondite and intangible points of Metaphysics, personal identity and unity, and a literal and real absurdity; and the consequence is, (interpretation out of the question,) that every Orthodox exposition is at once put *hors du combat*. He arrives forthwith, (we cannot wonder,) at the clear deduction, that be the true sense of the Scriptures what it may, "the Trinitarian exposition must be false." (p. 105.)

This logic, seems so fatal, that we feel disposed to examine a little, those pellucid premises on which his arguments are founded.

Personal identity, and unity, and a literal and real absurdity, are with him matters on which he can only speak in axioms.

* Calvin's Institutes, B. 1. chap. xiii. S. 5.

† Compare here, the remarks of the facetious and caustic Mr. Withington, in the N. Eng. Magazine for 1833, pp. 241, 242.

But if personal identity, in such creatures as *ourselves*, be a subject about which a Locke might be puzzled, and on which the pen of a Bishop Butler might worthily labor,* what must it be in relation to an Infinite Spirit, of even *one* of whose attributes, we can form no positive conception? Clendon, an old Socinian, did not think the word "person" a very easy one to manage, for he wrote a large book on it of upwards of 200 pages, though to be sure as Leslie said, its sense might be squeezed into a nutshell.† — Unity in man, Mr. N. thinks the simplest of simplicities. But we are as certain he is wrong, as he is, that he is right. Cases of double consciousness, such as Dr. Abercrombie has recorded,‡ are in their metaphysical character, quite enough to gravel him. Unity in the Deity, he thinks as easy of comprehension, — like his whole subject, "free from *all* doubt and difficulty;" (pref. p. xxix.) — but we never saw a comprehensible definition of it, and we never expect to see one: — at least in this world. The best we ever saw, was an incidental one, which fell from Fenelon in the midst of a lofty inspiration: *O unité infinie!* he exclaimed, *je vous entrevois* — I have but a glimpse of you.§ "*Quocirca*," says Petavius, who has been accused || of particular favor for the Arians, "*unitatis exquisitissimo genere, unus est Deus.*"¶ To us, things like these are no surprise, for we are well satisfied, that the metaphysical unity of the Godhead, is a subject on which the Bible has never, yes, never touched. Unity, is a relative term: it implies an opposite. The opposite to it in the Bible, is the *multiplicity* of the Divinities of Pagans. All then, which the Bible says, when it asserts that God is one, is, that he is not an *indefinite* number of beings, like the 30,000** worshipped by heathen hordes. But what has this to do with his metaphysical oneness: — his unity in all respects whatever? Nothing. — "For there is *one* God," says Paul in his first epistle

* Blomfield's Lectures, p. 360. also Bp. Berkley's Works, ii. 215.

† Leslie's Works, i. 441. Leslie, said Johnson, is a reasoner not to be reasoned against.

‡ Int. Powers, 241, &c. also Shaftsbury's Char'ks. iii. 192. (1732.)

§ Oeuvres ii. 268. 8vo. edition.

|| Walchii Biblioth. iii. 645.

¶ Theol. Dog. De Deo. Lib. ii. chap. 8. Sect. 3.

** Gray's Connection, Sac. and Prof. Literature, p. 118.

to Timothy.* And therefore, says the Unitarian, Jesus Christ cannot be Divine. A most unwarranted conclusion however, for Paul means merely to say, as his *context* shows, that the Jew and the Gentile have not a *different*, but the *same* God. To make any other use of the Unity of God, than the Apostle has done, is to offend and tamper with inferences, as Mr. N. says Trinitarians do, whose mode of supposed proof, is "wholly by way of inference." (p. 24, and his table of contents.) When will men learn, that it is quite as easy to err on the left hand as on the right?

Unity, is compatible with *some* diversities, as all know: in ourselves, it is compatible with *many*. In a being like a pure and infinite Spirit, it may be compatible with many more: with what, and with how many, that Spirit who *alone* searcheth the deep things of God, (1. Cor. ii. 10) would *alone* be authorized to tell. But revelation goes no further than to say, that God is not *multiple*, like divinities of wood and stone, or the luminaries of the heavens, adored by that unfortunate portion of our race, to whom a true God is a "God unknown." This then, is all we profess to teach, when we teach *biblically*, the unity of the Supreme Being. Paley, that "decided Unitarian" as Dr. Channing called him, could find in creation no more of a *defining* proof of the Divine unity, than unity of design.† We can find in revelation, no more *defining* proofs of it, than a similar exhibition of unity, viz., certain directions, that our religious trust homage, affection and worship, should all tend *one way*.‡ If any choose to go beyond this, and declare that they can pry more deeply into the essence of the Godhead, they may, but if

* Chap. ii. 5.

† Nat. Theol. chap. xxv.

‡ Some may think, that if we worship any other name than the Father's, our homage, &c. does not all tend *one way*. This is a mistake, arising from a neglect to "compare spiritual things with spiritual," and from judging by *our own* impressions of propriety. — Suppose e. g. that under the sanction of St John, (1 Epis. v. 15.) we "desire a petition," i. e. by metonymy the subject matter of a petition, of Jesus Christ, and name him alone in our devotions. Do we then neglect the Father? By no means. The Son answers prayer to the glory of the Father; (John xiv. 13.) and we doubt not that prayer addressed to him alone, honors the Father, as much as prayer addressed to the Father exclusively.

Compare Th. Goodwin's Works, v. 451. a. 5th reason.

they ever obtain more than Fenelon's glimpse, and can communicate their information in "words lawful to utter," we will listen to them, with a gratitude and an eagerness, with which we never honored teacher before.*†

Unity, is a relative term : so is absurdity. That which is absurd to one, may be anything but absurd to another. "Velleius, the Epicurean in Cic. de Nat. Deor. says, the immateriality of God, or his freedom from body, is unintelligible : *we* should find it very difficult, to conceive the Supreme Being clogged with a body."‡ "One of the hardest morsels to digest in Plato's philosophy, was his doctrine that God is incorporeal ; which by many was thought absurd, for that without a body, he could not have senses nor prudence nor pleasure."§ "Is there anything more delicate more sprightly than Pliny's judgment, when he is pleased to set it to work ? Anything more remote from vanity ? Setting aside his learning, of which I make less account, in which of them do any of us excel him ? And yet, there is scarce a puisne sophister, that does not convince him of untruth, and that pretends not to instruct him in the works of nature."|| "Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we who have it delivered ready dug and fashioned into our hands, are apt to imagine. And how often at fifty or threescore years old, are thinking men told what they wonder they could miss thinking of, which yet their own contemplations did not, and possibly never would have helped them to."¶ "There are ideas, which appear contrary to reason, only because we cannot perceive them, *in one point of view* ; and we discover this truth, not only in considering things which are foreign to our nature, but when we turn our attention on the

* Note M.

† Mr. N. might smile at this, but we should hope for more complaisance, from the author of the following sentiment : "It is permitted to man to see clearly, even on the *most important subjects*, only to a certain point, and for a small distance. Beyond that, our vision is dim." Dr. Ware's Sermon (p. 18.) at the ordination of Peabody 1820 : the temper of which, differs from Mr. N.'s book, *toto calo*.

‡ Hey's Norrisian Lectures. B. 3. ch. 16. Sect. 2.

§ Kames' Sketches iv. 147.

|| Montaigne's Essays i. 317. Edition 1685.

¶ Locke quoted in Bp. Gleig's Letters, p 41.

events which come daily under our inspection.”* This last authority is profoundly philosophical, and we could dwell on it long, but must not interrupt the current of our subject.† Suppose a father to tell his son, that water is made out of fire; which to him being a chemist, is well nigh an axiom. To the son it is a mystery, a gross absurdity, and he refuses to believe him, perhaps laughs at his parent’s unaccountable extravagance. Then, the Father of all, tells this father, that he is in a most important sense, *one*, and in another as important, *three*; but no sooner is this “enormous tax on his credulity” presented, than he imitates the stripling who disbelieved himself!

Verily, this is a lame demonstration of man’s all-scrutinizing genius. In the strong phrase of Shakspeare,—“Tis reasonless to reason thus.” These things ought never so to be. It should be felt to be a most rash and infatuated presumption, for a poor finite creature to declare that he knows “*the whole truth*,” on any subject whatever. “I wonder,” says Owen Felltham, “I wonder at those, who will assume a knowledge of all things: they are unwisely ashamed of an ignorance which is not disgraceful, for it is no shame for a man not to know that which is not in his power. We fill the world with cruel brawls, in the obstinate defence of things, of which we might with more honor confess ourselves ignorant.”‡ But Mr. N. is troubled with no qualms. He has the confidence of Phaeton, when he took the reins of the chariot of the Sun. He has the ingenuity of Prometheus, when he stole fire from the skies. He can give us light, and not only so, but all the light which can be had, and not only so, but all the light which can be had on some of the abstrusest subjects of hu-

* Necker on religious opinions p. 183.

† We are sometimes at a loss to choose between a smile and an ague, when we meet the extirpating assumption of some, who talk about the *intrinsic absurdity*, of the doctrine of the Trinity. Such a voracious *petitio principii* which like Pharaoh’s lean kine, devours all our “well-favored” arguments, at once, and without remorse, now provokes the risibles, and now awakens consternation. But we must be content with observing, that if Trinitarianism and Unitarianism may be supposed on a par, *before* the struggle for argumentative ascendancy is *begun*: then, if the former win the race it is *philosophically* correct, and *perfectly so*, to call the latter as much of an absurdity, as the former is gratuitously supposed to be.

‡ Resolves, p. 65. edition 1820.

man contemplation. He can do all this for our darkened minds, by means of but *one* enlightening instrument, which is "intrinsically ambiguous."

Gibbon however, the philosophic infidel, was not bold enough to assume or to arrogate, such semi-divine prerogatives. Even he, when giving an account of the belief of primitive Christians in the higher mysteries of their religion, cannot help saying, "that as often as we deduce any *positive* conclusion, from a *negative* idea, we are involved in darkness perplexity and inevitable contradiction."* Gibbon meant perhaps, to have his maxim cut but *one* way: if so, he is not the only instance of a self-confident reasoner, who forgot that truth has a *double edge*. His position is sound, (let it have been taken in what temper soever it might,) and shows abundantly, the indispensable necessity of implicit reliance on revelation, when we approach such vast themes, as the properties of a boundless nature. It has a direct and most significant bearing, upon such subjects, as identity, unity, and absurdity, which are all *negative*: such subjects as in our present state, *can* never be described, otherwise than negatively. It was designed perhaps originally for quite different usage, but we mistake greatly, if it be not as well fitted for a Unitarian, as for any other cuticle.

Had Mr. Norton felt, as even this enunciation of Gibbon's might have made him feel, he would have been sensible with devout humility, that in one coming to the Bible, preconceptions are out of place: — that even *nature*, as Butler, ("a man hardly to be named, without some expression of praise or reverence,")† has ably argued, teaches us to believe *beforehand*, that in a revelation, we might "find things very different from what we should have expected, and such as appear open to great objections;"‡ that therefore, the most appropriate question for him to ask, would be, not *why* says the Bible so, but simply, *what* does it declare? The besetting sin however, of himself, and of many in this changeful age, both orthodox and heterodox, is, that "vanity of philosophising," which Ernesti thus soberly rebukes, and for which, had he said nothing further, we can

* Gibbon Dec. and Fall iii. 13. Phil. edition, 1804.

† Gen. Repository, i. 9.

‡ Butler's Works, i. 232. Edinb. 1813.

easily conjecture, why the lax Le Clerc has been promoted over him. "In interpreting," he says, "the only question to be asked is, *what is said*, not, what may it be, or how truly may it be said. In *human* books, that many things are affirmed which are false, who does not know? And yet, these false assertions may be *truly interpreted*. But in *divine* books, when we are once satisfied that all which they affirm, is *most true*, it remains for us but to ascertain what they say."* †

We do fear that the radical defect of Mr. N., is an unwillingness to ask Ernesti's plain and man-becoming question, '*what says the Bible*,' with a determination to abide the consequences, teachably and humbly. He is one of the old *Parhermeneutes*, "risen from the dead," who thought themselves privileged to interpret Scripture, according to *their own sense of it*, and whom there was found firmness and wisdom enough to condemn, in so dark an age of the Church, as 692.‡ We do think his errors arise, from a cause not very different from that mentioned by Lactantius, as one cause among others, of the errors of ancient heretics: "Quidam vero, non satis cœlestibus literis eruditi, cum veritatis accusatoribus, respondere non possent, objicientibus vel impossibile vel incongruens esse: — depravati sunt ab itinere recto."§ And from a cause not dissimilar to that, to which Beausobre charges the errors of Irenæus, in his judgment of these very individuals: "Il fallois surtout, se defendre contre le préjugé et la partialité."|| He would hardly find countenance in an assembly, where Seneca should preside; for in his book concerning a *proper repose* for the wise man, (by which we presume he means among other things, a contentedness not to know "the whole truth" on some subjects,) even this pagan philosopher thus exclaims: "cogitatio nostra, cœli munimenta perrumpit: nec contenta est, id quod ostenditur, scire."¶

We speak this, not because we have dreamed so, for says the

* Ernesti opuscula philologica, p. 224.

† Note N.

‡ Bergier Theol. Dict. vi. 233. edition 1829. and 19th canon of the council in Trullo.

§ Lact. Instit. Lib. iv. cap. ult. edit. Sparkii p. 406, 7.

|| Hist. de Manich. T. ii. p. 4.

¶ Sen. Opera, i. 349. Elzevir edition.

review of 1819, "if we did believe these doctrines, (i. e. Trinity, &c.) to have been taught by Christ and his apostles, we should then think that a most overwhelming weight of external evidence, would be necessary to establish the truth of a revelation, which would appear to us to contain so much internal evidence *against* its truth."* The underscoring belongs to the reviewer.

This is somewhat "ambiguous," to be sure, but Dr. Priestley, for whom Mr. N. shows and has shown† unqualified deference, (though his greatest work was made up, as he confessed, by "looking through" authors,) will furnish the true gloss for it. "The doctrine of the Trinity, if it had been found there, (i. e. in the Scriptures,) it would have been impossible for any reasonable man to believe, as it implies a *contradiction*, which no miracles can prove."‡ We give Mr. Norton the full credit of this assertion, though he has but "*ambiguously*" endorsed it: — full credit, without equivocation, mental reservation, or any qualification whatever. We do undoubtedly fear, that such "thorough" adventurers, as himself and Dr. Priestley, have PREJUDGED THE CASE, as these references satisfactorily evince, and that if there were no help for them, in versions and readings, the "intrinsic ambiguities" of language and "inconclusive reasonings," § and in an abasement of the Bible from the rank of a revelation to that of a mere record of one, || they would not hesitate to discard the Bible, "as a book of riddles, and what is worse, of riddles admitting of no solution." (p. 21.) We do undoubtedly fear, that if they were deprived of such resources, they would actually reject the Bible altogether, or be such miscalled believers in it, as the Gnostics and Semler, who unblushingly taught, that there is a *great abundance* of *false opinions* and *false reasonings*, in the discourses even of our Lord and his apostles. ¶ We

* Ch. Disciple, N. Ser. i. 331.

† Gen. Repos. Vol. i. ii. iii.

‡ Hist. Early Opinions, i. 48. Query. — Would not the Dr. have said as much against all opposers of his pet theory about *phlogiston*? And where is *phlogiston* now?

§ The language Dr. P. applies to the arguments of Paul. Corruptions of Christianity, ii. 370.

|| Ch. Examiner, 1828.

¶ Storr opuscula i. 20, 21. — We believe Dr. Priestley never charged *Christ* with error: — but surely there was not much, to hinder a man from doing so, by whom Christ was esteemed "as fallible and peccable as any other prophet!"

almost tremble, when we see them handling with perfect tact and fearlessness, the same weapons which notorious Infidels have brandished in their deadly warfare with Christianity. "Superstition," says Hume, and all know well enough what *he* means by it, "Superstition being founded on false opinion, must immediately vanish, when true philosophy has inspired juster sentiments of superior powers." *Essay on suicide!** "Religion," says Mr. Norton, "must be taken, I will not say out of the hands of priests, — that race is fast passing away, — but out of the hands of divines, such as the generality of divines have been, and its exposition and defence must become the study of philosophers." (pref. p. xxxiv.) We will not stop to show, that these declarations are fairly matched, in sarcasm and self complacency, but as to the *policy* they recommend, we must say, it has "a rank odor" of that, by which the apostate Julian attempted to reform Christianity out of the whole Roman Empire!† We feel "a secret dread, an inward horror" creeping over us, when we compare such omens, and think of Paul's vehement warning against philosophy, (Col. ii. 8.) and his judicial execration of all corrupters of the Gospel. (Gal. i. 8.) We fly to baptized philosophy, to see what testimony she will bear before such fearful admonitions; and at the mouth of Bacon, who in the language of Chancellor Kent, is "one of the greatest oracles of human wisdom," she gives us this ever memorable counsel: "The prejudice hath been *infinite*, that both Divine and human knowledge hath received, by the intermingling and tempering, of the one with the other: as that, which hath filled the one, full of heresies, and the other, full of speculative fictions and vanities."‡§

* Phil. Works, iv. 557.

† Tillemont Hist. Ecc. vii. 344, &c. — Abbe Bleterie, vie de Julian pp. 260, 265. — S. Johnson's "Arts of Julian," pp. 30, &c. edition 1689. — The *kindness*, with which philosophy is to mend us, is aptly exhibited by Hume, (Phil. Works, iv. 513,) where he says, the only way in which we can cure "the frailty of human reason," is, "to oppose one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling," and then, "happily escape into the calm regions of philosophy," to feast ourselves, upon the spectacle!!

‡ B. Works, Montag. edition, i. 259. see also the sentiment reiterated, Vol. ii. 129.

§ Note O.

And we should wonder greatly therefore, but that clamor had taught us to be cautious, that any should remonstrate against the charge, of unbelief in the Scriptures, who will, for philosophy's, or system's, or reason's sake, treat them with disparagement. If one so treated the Koran, we are well assured, he would not be accounted a genuine Mussulman. "Unto God," says Mahomet, "appertaineth the kingdom of heaven and earth, and the day whereon the hour shall be fixed, on that day, shall those who charge the Koran with vanity, perish."* We do not wonder then, that a Mussulman should suspect of insincerity, any one, who, while professing to be a Christian, wished to claim his fellowship in the concerns of religion; and should refuse him a moment's hearing as a Moorish ambassador is said to have done, when formerly importuned by a company of Socinians.† But our disposition to wonder is vastly excited, nay it stands completely aghast, before the unrivalled incongruity, of complaining of the charge just mentioned, and almost before the breath uttering such a complaint is spent, hurling the same charge ‡ back on an antagonist, and at this incongruity too, in those, who according to their own principles, "have LEAST OF ALL, any just excuse for

* Sale's Koran, ii. 235. Persian Letters, i. 229.

† Christian Obs. xxvii. p. 91, and Leslie's Works, i. 207. A flippant writer in the Christian Disciple, N. Series, ii. 409, 10, has insinuated with servile imitation of Priestley, (Horsley's Tracts, 307,) that Leslie *forged* the letter to the Moorish ambassador, addressed him by the Socinians, but which he utterly refused to accept. To this *insinuation*, we think it quite right to reply, with an argument at least as valid: — there is too much *internal* probability, for the truth of such a letter, to permit us to account it a forgery.

‡ We say the *same* charge; but in strict justice we might say, a far heavier one, in fact the *heaviest literally*, which can be made against men professing to be Christians. On p. 86, Mr. N. says, if Trinitarian doctrines are not the doctrines of Christianity, they are among "the *most* insane fictions of human folly;" and on p. 293, that if these doctrines are false, then he who teaches them as Christian doctrines, is the "*worst* enemy of Christianity." It is idle to split hairs about this phraseology, "ambiguous" though it may be. There can be no reasonable doubt, that the author of it esteems Trinitarians, as believing in the *most* monstrous fictions of lunatics, and as being more fatal foes to religion, than the Deist or Atheist. They are its *worst* enemies in his estimation; and the worst enemies of Christianity, we fear, can be compared only to him, who was "a murderer from the beginning," and to those unhappy beings, who can be forgiven "neither in this world nor in that which is to come."

a deficiency in that temper, and a want of those good works, which our religion requires."*

With keenness, has Michaelis said: "It has been the habit of wits, to put into the mouths of all the over-zealous Orthodox, disputing with opponents, 'the Lord rebuke thee Satan.' As most theologians have done with language like this, it were well that those who laugh at them, had done with it too."† *Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?* Truly, when with our neighbors, feeling an occasional impulse of "the spirit of the age," we dream of a reform, and looking around us for ensamples, better than the past has offered, find such exhibitions as this, in the very *models for perfection*, we must be pardoned if we grow somewhat distrustful, and think that after all there is *sage advice*, if not divine authority, in the counsel of Jeremiah; "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." — Ch. vi. 16.‡

* Priestley's Evidences, p. 274. Boston. 1795.

† Review of Semler, trans'd in Gen. Repository, Vol. iv. 2.

‡ Note P.



APPENDIX.

NOTE A. (P. 7.)

DOUBLE SENSE.

The two-fold character, which some plastic interpreters give the Bible, is well illustrated by Dr. Burton Professor of Divinity at Oxford. "In the passage before us, Acts xx. 28, he (i. e. Mr. Belsham) wishes us to read, the Church of the Lord, and by *the Lord*, he means us to understand, *Jesus Christ*. But it is singular, that at Col. iii. 13. he wishes to read, not *as Christ has forgiven us*, but, *as the Lord has forgiven us*: so that at Acts xx. 28, he tries to evade an argument for the Divinity of Christ, by understanding *the Lord* to mean *Christ*, and at Col. iii. 13, he evades a similar argument, by understanding *the Lord* to mean *God*!" — *Ante-Nicene Fathers 2d Edition, p. 23.*

With the same flexibility, have we known two Unitarian professors, *relax* the expression, "form of God," in Phil. ii. 6, so as to have it intimate, but a *partial* resemblance, between the Son and the Father, and thus depreciate the argument for his Divinity; and at the same time, *make intensive* the expression, "like unto thee," in Deut. xviii. 18. so as to have it intimate, an *exact* similitude, between our Saviour and Moses, and bolster up the argument for his simple humanity!

Is this the cis-atlantic doctrine of accommodation? We know what Semler's was in Germany, and that Mr. N. ventured to speak in his Inaugural Discourse, (p. 35.) somewhat slightly of the "extravagant and untenable speculations," perhaps of him — certainly of "some" of his brethren. — For such speculations are the above, the substitute?

NOTE B. (P. 9.)

ABSOLUTE INCREDIBILITY.

"As to the impossibility, of believing contradictions, I much question the fact, and whether it would not puzzle the objectors themselves to show, either that nobody ever believed the Trinity, or that all who did, have understood it in a sense, that carries no contradiction." Tucker's *Light of Nature*, iii. 257, the Cambridge Edition.

Tucker was accounted "a heretic by the Orthodox," and is the man to whose

originality Paley* said he was so much indebted. — Mackintosh's View of Phil. 176, 177.

The late Rev. and now Hon. Mr. Everett, also, (we are quite willing to call him *right honorable* for his gentlemanly candor,) understood this subject better than Mr. Norton. On p. 13. of a sermon preached at N. York, Jan. 20, 1821, at the dedication of the first Congregational Church, he thus writes: — "I do not mean to say, that I do not think *our* views of Christianity, rest on stronger foundations of argument, than any others, essentially different. If I did not think so, I could not hold them, and be an honest man. But you are Protestants: — do you suppose, that the great and ancient Catholic Church, the Church of Bossuet, of Massillon, of Fenelon, has no arguments, by which those illustrious men were able to give a ground for their faith? Or you are Catholics: — but do you think, that Luther, and Calvin, and Melancthon, were led without strong and solid reasons, to adopt what they called the Reformation? You are of the Church of England: — but do you believe that Howe and Baxter, had no arguments to defend their dissent? Or you are a Dissenter: — but will you not allow, that divines like Taylor and Tillotson, had something to say for their cause?"

To this, we will only venture to add, that *all* the great men enumerated in his sentences, were Trinitarians; and if they had "something to say," "arguments," and "strong and solid reasons," for their differences from *one another*, we may be authorized to affirm, without taking an unusual stride beyond the bounds of modesty, that *a fortiori*, they had such things to urge, in behalf of their differences from Unitarians.

NOTE C. P. 10.

"Those who think themselves wise, have a delight in themselves, far beyond that, in which the really prudent dare to indulge. They treat other men impudently: they dispute with fierceness and assurance."

Pascal's Thoughts. Craig's Edit. pp. 14, 15.

Sit ista in Græcorum levitate perversitas, qui maledictis insectantur eos, a quibus de veritate dissentiunt," — Cicero de finibus.

NOTE D. P. 11.

Compare with all this, Lardner's account of Arius, vol. ii. 306. 4to, edition. "He writes with much spirit, and a *full assurance of the truth of his opinions*," and in one of his letters, declares a Unitarian, at least a trimmer, (Eusebius of Nicomedia,) *Orthodox*, and those who oppose him, *ignorant even of the rudiments of Christianity*; — pronounces them *heretics*, their doctrine *impious*, and avers, that he would die a thousand deaths, sooner than receive *such* doctrine, from *such* persons. The entire letter of Arius, from which Lardner has candidly quoted, is given by Milner, in his Chh. Hist. 12mo. Edit. 1822. vol. ii. 47.

Here then, in the very *bud and blossom* of Unitarianism, and by one who was called "affable and courteous," we find bandied, the detestable terms,

* Paley, Dr. Channing has the assurance to call a "decided Unitarian." — Letter to S. C. Thatcher, p. 24.

"ignorant," "impious," and "heretical:" — Orthodoxy claimed for *self*, and denied to all others, and all this, with the fullest assurance!* We will only add to this, something from Mr. Norton's own pen, relative to Bishop Horsley. "There are many perhaps, unable to perceive the strength of his arguments, who yet receive an impression, of the goodness of that cause, the confidence of whose defender, seems never to falter." (*Gen. Repository*. i. 40.) If this was meant to imply, that Bishop H. manifested such confidence, to make an impression; we beg leave to affirm, that the allegation will imply nothing less, in the case of Arius, Francken, Socinus and himself.

Bruyere, that faithful student of "characters," did not let matters of this description, escape him. "Nothing," he says, "more nearly resembles a *lively conviction*, than an *obstinate conceit*; whence proceed parties, cabals, heresies." Bruyere's Works. 6th. Edit. Lond. 1713. i. p. 255.

NOTE E. (P. 13.)

PERSECUTION.

In the text, "the Athanasian creed" is inserted, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity. Mr. N. must know, that that creed is dropped, by at least *every* Protestant denomination, in the United States. It surely were most unwise, to attempt to win us, by such invidious representations. If it were mentioned to *our* reproach, on account of its damnatory clauses, in bare self-defence we say, that the quotations from his own pages, are a fair offset against it.

His remarks upon the effects of Trinitarianism, seem to authorize the inference, that this form of Christianity, and this alone, has belched forth persecution and its attendant horrors, with the fury of a laboring volcano. If they do, we most solemnly protest against their partiality and injustice. The subject of persecution, is one we have studied occasionally with reference to two questions: what professing Christians *first* began to persecute their brethren? and what persecuted with the *greatest severity*?

We know that persecution is a subject, parallel to what Biblical critics style in their department, "*locus vexatissimus*." And we know also, that the sentiment of a large number, in relation to it, is quite unfavorable to those who are imagined to hold strict opinions in theology. Hume undertakes to palliate the pitiless persecution which the early Christians suffered from the heathen, by supposing they abounded in the provoking qualities, of "imprudent zeal and bigotry." (*Phil. Wks.* iii. 64.) There are those, who with as much readiness, and with as little authority, charge every so called persecution, *within* the Church, to these same excuseless faults. As if it must always be true that a certain class of Christians will infallibly be in the wrong.

It will not answer for us therefore, to make such professions of freedom from zealotry, sectarianism, and proselytism, as are found on p. xxxiii. of Mr. N.'s preface. We hope, however, that we have not forgotten the maxim of the judge, of the interpreter, of every candid and honest man: "*audi alteram partem*." We have of course found differences, in such authorities as Alexander and Arius, Athanasius and Eusebius of Nicomedia, Tillemont and Philostorgius. Gibbon is variable, but both he and Jortin discover, we think, less of

* So Photinus, allowed no creed but his own to be Orthodox, and called every other, heretical. Parker's Ecc. Historians, p. 275. 3d edition.

impartiality than does even Lardner: very frequently is some emollient gloss spread with a delicate spatula upon their pages for the Arians; while the enormities of the Orthodox, stand out awry, denuded and unvarnished. When there are such contrarities in testimony, and when perhaps a court of justice, might for one reason or another involving their interest, discard the whole, what shall we do? We know but of a single way of proceeding, since we cannot shut the court, and call for other testifiers, none others being accessible, and that is to *believe both sides*, and reconcile them as well as we can.

With this purpose as a guide, we shall make out such a story as our materials will allow.—Mosheim says, that the principle which justified visiting errors in religion, when adhered to after proper admonition, with penalties and punishments, was approved by many, from the very time when Constantine gave peace and security to the Christians,—that this principle, was corroborated by examples, in the conflicts with the Donatists and Priscillianists,—was unequivocally sanctioned, by the authority of Augustine, and transmitted down to succeeding ages. (Vol. i. 322.)

Now, in respect to the question, which *first* persecuted one another, Trinitarians or Anti-Trinitarians,* we may leave out Augustine, who was not born till 354, and the Priscillianists, who sprang up at a still later period. Only, we would remark of Augustine, that how severe soever his standard for the dues of a heretic, he earnestly protested against persecution unto death:† an extremity, from which, had he taken lessons of Unitarians who flourished *before* him, he might have learned not to shrink.

The case of the Donatists, *did* occur, previous to the age of Arius. But they were generally Orthodox; or if there were Unitarians among them, as Priestley‡ alleges, what was exhibited in the days of Arius, would only render easier, a solution of their inveteracy, in the manufacturing of trouble. The ground on which they rested their apology for schism, was, a mere point of external order. Still, for that, they hesitated not to sacrifice the peace, and sunder the unity of the Church. Now, we believe, it is an admitted principle in politics, that he who will endanger the most precious interests of a State, for a *very small cause*, is punished, not in proportion to the abstract consequence of his crime, but the magnitude of the interests he puts in jeopardy.§ Treason, may exist in an act, which if not treasonable, would hardly deserve notice.—With these *data* we say, that if the Donatists, for a mere point of order, would hazard and wreck the tranquility and unity of the Church, they merited severe, not to say the severest reprobation. We believe Unitarians think it a good argument, that Trinitarians deserve weighty censure, since they make a schism in the Church, for such an insignificant doctrine as the Trinity.|| They ask us, how we can be so presumptuous and cruel, as to rend

* This term is more appropriate than Unitarians, and is used by Dr. Channing himself.—Remarks on Dr. Worcester.—We have not used it however invariably.

† Epistle to Marcellinus, A. D. 412.

‡ Ch. History, i. 464.

§ Blackstone, iv. 16. Paley's Mor. Phil. 11th edition, v. 2. pp. 296, 299. In a scale of crimes "the first degree, should consist of those, which immediately tend to the dissolution of society." Beccaria, p. Am. Ed. p. 29. "Crimes, that disturb the public tranquillity, ought to be derived from the nature of the thing, and to be relative to this tranquillity: such as imprisonment, exile, corrections, and other chastisements, proper for the reclaiming of turbulent spirits."—Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, Book XII. ch. iv. also Vattel. B. 1. ch. ii. §. 16.

|| Schism, says Dr. Channing, (Letter to Thacher, p. 21.) is the greatest of Anti-Christian sins! O tempora! O mores!—*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*

the seamless garment of Christ, for such "anise, mint, and cummin;" and did they sit in council upon us, we might have from them such an appeal, in the shape of no "ambiguous" decree.

If they do, or would do thus, how can they stigmatize the Catholics, for some pungent castigation of the Donatists, who were willing to put so much at risk, for such petty causes,—who showed a most unexampled bitterness of temper, in literally scraping, washing, melting, burning or breaking, chalices or altars or churches: * in rejecting and condemning the *validity* of all Catholic ordinances: who showed and persevered in all this bitterness, before the face of the whole Church, and in spite of the voice of council after council, and the Emperor himself:—and who, some how or other, (excuse it as historians will,) were associated with, and defended by, the Circumcelliones, as predatory and ferocious a horde of villains, as ever polluted the earth with their pestiferous visitation? †

Unitarians, are lovers of social and political order. In Massachusetts, singular as it may seem, they have been the avowers and maintainers of the principle, that *government should interfere* for the support of religion.‡ Ought they then to declaim, against the lifting of the political arm, to crush such a rude and reckless, most uncharitable and ungentelemanly confederacy of radicals, as these Donatists? We think not, and we might go on then to say, that if so much might be admitted, in respect to *them*, it would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that it was right for Constantine, to secure the peace of the Empire in the days of *Arius*, by austere civil enactments. For, if speculative opinions are not worth polemic toil and pain, if religion consist altogether in certain emotions, and creeds are matters of indifference; then it is *as* wrong, (not to say far more so,) to disturb the harmony, and blast the comfort of Society, by waging warfare for the Unity, as for the Trinity of the Godhead. And if so, how could Arius be excused, for turning incendiary with such little cause, and lighting a train which almost made the Christian world, a general scene of conflagration?§ But he would not rest. He gave bishops, towns, provinces, realms, an empire, no peace whatever. The Monarch on his throne, beheld the wavings of the fiery flood, and trembled to think, that in the fervent heat of the raging elements around him, the very pillars of his government might melt away, and the noblest principality on earth be drowned in destruction and perdition. He lifted his royal voice, and cried aloud, to hush the angry storm to rest: but his expostulations, entreaties, and commands, flew by like the idle wind. Is it wonderful, that at last he "girded himself with power," and in the tone, and with the menaces of irresistible authority, exclaimed, "hitherto shalt thou come and no further?"

But this is hurrying down too fast to a later period.—Our question is, which *first* persecuted one another,—Trinitarians or Anti-Trinitarians? The cases

* Fleury Ecc. Hist. Lib. xv. Sect. 32.

† Gibbon, iii. 67, &c.

‡ Christian Disciple, N. Ser. v. 232.

§ Well has Boileau described, the "persecution, torture, murder," which "followed in *his* train," and the *magnitude* of the matter, for which he brought death upon the world and untold woes:—*one syllable!*

"Lorsqu' attaquant, le Verbe et sa divinite,
D'une syllabe imple un saint met argument,
Remplit tous les esprits, d'aigreurs si meurtrieres,
Et fit du sang Chretien, couler tant de rivieres."

Boileau Sat. xii. 199.

of the Donatists and Priscillianists, being disposed of, and the authority of Augustine, having been shown to be pre-quoted, (if we may use a convenient compound,) the way is now fairly open, to examine the bearing of facts, in the age of Arius and Alexander, upon this important point.

Arius, was a gifted, learned, affable and courteous, presbyter of Alexandria, of blameless life and deportment. Still, like Cæsar and many others, honorable, wise, great, and even good, "he was ambitious." Disappointed about elevation to the episcopate,* a subject, which in *later* times, has spoiled estimable tempers, he was resolved to show, that in talents and learning, he was no whit behind his successful competitor. He broached new doctrines, gained many favorites, and made much stir. The spiritual authority of the Church, was in one way and another exerted against him, no doubt with less gentleness than it might have been, if wielded by another than his rival in the race, for the "golden apple" of ecclesiastical promotion.

He is at last, excommunicated. Thus deprived of *the countenance of the church*, what would a man, "exceedingly well qualified to form a party, and carry on any enterprize he should engage in,"† as Lardner admits Arius was, — what would such a man chagrined, mortified, and exasperated, do? Might he not, permit an attempt, to enlist *the multitude* or *the State* in his behalf, and might he not connive at practices, which in the day of honor, and the station of emolument, he would have scorned?‡ This seems consonant, with what we know of human nature, and Tillemont, quoting from the writers of the age, states authoritatively, *even more* than we have presented in the form of supposition. The Arians he says, "were continually raising seditions and persecutions against the church,§ on the one hand, stirring up the magistrates against her, by the solicitations of unhappy courtizans whom they had seduced, on the other exposing Christianity, to the mockery of its enemies, by the shameful behavior of young girls of their party, running perpetually about the streets. After this, we must not be surprised, at what the truth constrains Eusebius of Cæsarea to say, that the divisions of the people against one another, ran so high in Alexandria, as to give occasion to the heathen, to make a jest, of the most solemn parts of our religion in their public theatres."||

Now, that Arius was excommunicated, i. e. had ecclesiastical censures passed upon him, we hardly call persecution. Arius knew what the church was, before he entered it: he knew that a violation of its creed, would be censured if necessary, by excision from its communion. If knowing this, he still *voluntarily* entered, he had no right to complain of the consequences. As well might a for-eigner, to whom our laws seem unjust, presume to violate them with impunity.¶

* Dict. des cultes Religieux i. 119. It is doubted in a note in Murdock's Mosheim, i. 343. Philostorgius Lib. i. ch. 4, says that Arius even preferred Alexander before himself: a moderation however, as Tillemont well says, intrinsically improbable, and quite estranged from his disposition. Ecc. Hist. vi. 242. also Ceillier Hist. Aut. Sac. iv. 402. This need not be questioned a moment, if we can believe with Lardner, that he was "exceedingly well qualified to form a party." He had says a biographer, "*un fonds de melancolie, d'inquietude, d'ambition, et un gout secret, pour les nouveantes.*" — Biog. Universelle ii. 466.

† Vol. iv. 306. 4to edition.

‡ Arius, was a poet, and wrote pieces in behalf of his creed, to be scattered among the common people, not remarkable it is said for their *decency*, and which had as much of *argument* in them, as the theological part of Hudibras.

§ Alexander, in a letter to the Bp. of Byzantium, says, that Arius and his followers attempted to raise a persecution against him, when the church was at *peace*. — Notes of Tillemont. vi. 737.

|| Tillemont, Ecc. Hist. vi. 249.

¶ Compare Miller's Lecture on Creeds, in the *Addenda* to the Spruce Street Lectures, pp. 338, 339, &c. A most lucid, fair, and valuable tract.

The answer is, if you think so, stay away, no one obliges you to come here, but if you do come, you must conform to our rules, for juridical science teaches us, that there is no objection to *implied powers** in the constitution of an organized society, and if there be *one* such power, it is that of self-preservation.

Passing the excommunication of Arius by, we see, if we are not mistaken, in the statement of Tillemont, something which looks like *the beginning* of that practice, to appeal to power *without the church*, in order to harass those *within it*, which in the very essence of persecution, — “the head and front of its offending.”

To us then, it seems at least plausible, that the charge of *first* persecuting brethren, belongs not to Trinitarian Christians.

Nor can we see, in the civil penalties and severities, which followed the great council of Nice, so much the hand of Ecclesiastics, as of an Emperor, who cared little, which side was right or wrong, so that there were no disturbance within his government. Constantine's severity, as even Gibbon seems to allow,† arose from pique, at the want of deference shown by *both* sides to his authority.

We fully believe, he called the council, with the “untutored sense of a soldier and statesman,” not to determine a creed, about which “a Roman general whose religion might be still a subject of doubt,” would little care: but to quash disputes, by which the provinces of his noble and extensive empire, were “distracted with religious discord.” We think this “imperfect proselyte,” i. e. to Christianity as he is called by Gibbon, from whom we have all along been quoting, would have pronounced the same judgment, and inflicted the same penalties, let the cause have issued as it might. Worldlings would admit as much, for they, arguing from a worldly knowledge of human nature, would say, that it naturally became the Emperor, as a politician and a philosopher, to be more concerned about the safety of a great state, than the petty victory of a sect of dogmatists. We believe they judge human nature, as it is often exhibited by men in power, but too correctly. We think therefore, that Constantine acted the part he would have acted, if neither orthodox nor heterodox, but a complete indifferentist. He wanted political salubrity and peace, and nothing more. The unsettled condition of his own religious sentiments (to say nothing of the authority of Gibbon,) is fully shown, in his speedy recal and patronage of Arius, and the efforts he made to re-instate him at Alexandria.

The persecution which followed the council of Nice, we then think was Constantine's alone: the out-breaking of an “untutored” soldier's will. Military chieftains, are not remarkable for lenity, whether their aim be to crush *theological, political, or financial* heresy. But do we not believe, that the party which he happened to espouse, had their persecutions also? O yes, and enough of them, and enough of them without excuse, to satisfy the most eager and grasping anticipation of our concessions. Under Constantine's example as a cover, and with his authority as a shield, they pursued their own favorite plans, with melancholy, disgusting, and terrific severity. But we must say, that when the under spoke of the wheel became the uppermost, when in a few years, the fortunes Arianism revived, and rolled onwards to the summit of

* Story's Commentaries on the Constitut. 1. 418.

† Gibbon, iii. 29, 30.

power, its votaries certainly equalled, and as a moderate and candid authority says, even *eclipsed* their oppressors.*

And what is very remarkable, they were if possible, more unsparing towards different sects of their own persuasion,† than towards those of a completely opposite faith.

“Amid the woods, the leopard knows his kind,
The tiger, preys not on the tiger brood;”

But Arian, could not show his fellow-Arian, mercy. Perhaps however, this is more consonant to human nature, than at first sight we may suppose.‡ We have rarely if ever, seen *more rancorous animosity, than between different parties of the same denomination*. Even Solomon has said, the contentions of brethren, are like the bars of a castle, i. e. you may as easily break through the gates of a Bastile, as remove the causes which sustain them. *Acerrima ferme proximorum odia sunt*, says Tacitus. Witness the Jesuits and Jansenists among the Catholics, and — but we forbear to come nearer home. If any are suffering from this party spirit, we give them a text below from Warburton, for their study, imitation and comfort.§

In a short compass then, this is as correct a view as we can give, of the commencement of persecution, after division and hostility arose in the Church, through jarring opinions respecting the internal character of the Godhead.

Subsequent to the days of Constantine, in the time of such emperors, as Constantius and Valens on the Arian side, and Theodosius and Justinian on the other, we are willing to grant, that it is hardly worth one's while to adjust a balance, for weighing the alternate vengeance of orthodox or heterodox persecution. We are willing to say, in the general language of Winterberg: “A seculo quarto, in orbe Christiano, nihil magis salutem afflit et imminuit, quam rixæ et contentionēs de dogmatibus, quam inimicitia in secus sentientes, quam crudelitas immanissima, in eos, qui decreta partis adversæ tanquam ex tripode dicta revereri nollent.|| “Our calmer reason,” says even Gibbon, “will impute an equal, at least an indiscriminate measure of good and evil, to the hostile sectaries, who assumed and bestowed the appellations of orthodox and heretics.”¶ We are willing to take and give, at the hands of the infidel historian, if while doing so, we can bespeak his suffrage, for a man like Athanasius, who, he says, “in the various turns of his prosperous and adverse fortune, never lost the confidence of his friends, or the esteem of his enemies:” ** — a man, who, when asked by Constantius to grant the Arians a church at Alexandria, an-

* Dr. Walch quoted in Murdock's Mosheim, i. 357. Let the following instance supply the place of a multitude of quotations.

“The rites of Baptism, were conferred (conferred!) on women and children, who for that purpose, had been torn from the arms of their friends and parents: the mouths of communicants were held open by a wooden engine, while the consecrated bread was forced down their throats: the breasts of tender virgins were either burnt with red hot egg-shells, or inhumanly compressed between sharp and heavy boards.” — Gibbon, iii. 66.

† Fleury, Ecc. Hist. Lib. xix. Sect. 35.

‡ Kames' Sketches, iv. 264.

§ “I believe no one (all things considered,) has suffered more, from the low and vile passions, of the high and low amongst our brethren, than myself. Yet God forbid, it should ever suffer me to be cold in the Gospel's interests; which are indeed so much my own, that without them, I should be disposed to consider humanity, as the most forlorn part of the creation.” — Warburton's Letters, p. 40.

|| Commentationes Theologicæ, iv. 423.

¶ Hist. iii. 71.

** Hist. iii. 39 and 40.

answered by merely proposing as an exchange of concessions, that the Orthodox should have a church at Antioch,* and was replied to by his *very tolerant* opponents, with this *very sufficient* reason, (at least for them) that "*it would be inconvenient.*"† We are willing to do this, till we reach the age of those Goths and Vandals, whose blind devotion and ignorance, says a writer in the "*Pillars of Priestcraft and Orthodoxy, &c.*" vol. iv. 270. were first made use of by the *clergy*, but who, in his own blind and ignorant zeal, forgot, that these people were converted by Bp. Ulphilas "a decided Unitarian," and were for centuries, the determined advocates, of a "craft" and a "doxy," the prototype of which, says Jerome, made the whole world groan.‡ Of these tremendous scourges, we are compelled to exclaim, that none who bore the Christian name, ever so outraged humanity as they. To them, unless the Arian Constantius, (Gibbon iii. 66.) or the Arian Valens,§ or the hateful Circumcelliones, (Gibbon iii. 69.) can claim the precedence, is due the infamous celebrity, of devising the punishment, of *burning* a fellow Christian. (Gibbon iv. 400.) So relentless was their bigotry, that it was their last sentiment, in the fearful hour of dissolution. (Gibbon iv. 401.) So demoniac, was their temper, that it did not spare woman, and made woman herself unsparing: and this too, in despite of a dignity and rank, which should have respected themselves, if they could not respect the same qualities in others. An Arian father-in-law and a king, amputated the nose and ears of a princess; (Gibbon iv. 273.) and an Arian mother-in-law, and a queen, seized another princess, whom her "blandishments" could not convert from Orthodoxy, seized her by her hair, dashed her against the ground, kicked her till she was covered with blood, and at last, gave orders that she should be thrown naked into a fish-pond. (Gibbon, iv. 411.)

The answer to all this may be, that these Goths and Vandals were a short time before, but perfect savages. True: but had they been good Orthodox propagandists, we are not *sure*, though we are *somewhat suspicious*, that their conduct would have been accounted a regular part, of the *Auto da Fe* "train," of "persecution, torture, murder, malignant bigotry, and loathsome hypocrisy," which has followed the doctrine of the Trinity. And even if they were such savages, could not the *improved* religion meliorate them a *little*? And if it could not, how could their Unitarianism be vanquished by such as Theodelinda, who completed its overthrow, even among her inhuman Lombard subjects, before the conclusion of the sixth century?¶ Her triumph, (says Waddington p. 102.) "may be read by the Catholic, without a blush, and recorded by the historian, without a sigh; since it was accomplished, if not by the process of rational conviction, at least, without the savage inflictions, by which sudden religious changes are usually effected."

And again, if the Goth's and Vandals were perfect savages, so were the original inhabitants of England; and yet when Ethelbert "the most potent king of Kent," was converted by the Orthodox St. Austin, and might have extended Christianity in his kingdom, by the force and constraint of civil power,

* Waddington, note, p. 96.

† Priestley's Ch. Hist. ii. 129. The Dr. is said to be candid. We must certainly give him full credit for the above quotation.

‡ Hieron. adv. Lucif. tom. i. p. 145.

§ Murdock's Mosheim, i. 355, notes. An accident says Gibbon, iii. 262.

¶ Compare, Fleury, Ecc. Hist. Lib. xxxv. Sect 13. — Biog. Universelle, xlv. 272.

he did not do so, "for he had learnt from his instructors and leaders to salvation, that the service of Christ, ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion."* In England therefore, Christianity, under Orthodox auspices, grew by the gentle means of moral suasion, and became a nursing mother to the soil: in Africa and elsewhere, under Arian auspices, it seemed the genius of "unmixed evil," stalking about with giant strides, bathing the ground with blood and searing it with fire.

Truth requires, perhaps, that this strong statement, be sustained by examples, in addition to what have been given already. The following may suffice.

Says Limborch, the partial friend of Locke that "decided Unitarian,"—"some had their tongues cut out, others their hands, others their feet chopped off, others their eyes dug out, and others were miserably slain through the extremity of their tortures."† This is but a sentence, from a whole chapter on "Arian persecutions," which were thought quite awful enough, to be introduced as a prelude to the history of the Inquisition. Says Gibbon: (iv. 399.) "The cruel and absurd enterprise, of subduing the mind of a whole people, was undertaken by the Vandals (i. e. the Unitarians) alone." He then goes on to detail, the horrors of this crusade of crusades out-heroding Herod,—this *maximum* of inferno-human vengeance,—whose design was, not from mistaken zeal, to recover a lost sepulchre, but with "unmixed" self-will, to make others think, as that will chose. And he thus shows, how this plan, "steamed up from hell," (as Dr. Channing, in an ever memorable *argumentum ad invidiam*, said Unitarianism was *not*), was consummated. "Respectable citizens, noble matrons, and consecrated virgins, were stripped naked and raised in the air by pullies, with a weight suspended to their feet. In this painful attitude, their bodies were torn with scourges, or burnt in the most tender parts, with red hot plates of iron. The amputation of the ears, the nose, the tongue, and the right hand, was inflicted by the Arians."‡ "A new mode of conversion, which might subdue the feeble, and alarm the timorous, was employed by the Arian ministers. They imposed by fraud or violence, the rites of baptism."§ "The Arian clergy, surpassed in religious cruelty the king and his Vandals"!!!‡

Would not any one, if these accounts of "persecution, torture, murder," and of "all that is malignant in bigotry," if not of "all that is loathsome in hypocrisy," were read to him *without names*, believe, that we were extracting, from the *stolen* records, of 'The HOLY and APOSTOLIC Court of the Inquisition?' Would he not start, as Priestley did, under the scourges of Horsley, and say of us, as he said of that heavy-handed controversialist, when we told him, that we had been extracting from the *published* annals of Unitarianism, that we were falsifiers of history, and defamers of the character of the dead?§ But facts, are "*monumentum are perennius*:" they cannot be undone, and would not be belied, by an Infidel, who said, that the difference between the histories of a Trinitarian and Unitarian, was that, which exists between sketches by the pencil of bigotry and the pencil of reason.||

We will now, but add a word from the "heretic" Tucker, and submit our view of persecution to the candor of our readers.

* Bede's Ecc. Hist. p. 70. London, 1723.

† Hist. of the Inquisit. p. 72.

‡ Gibbon, iv. 405.

§ Horsley's Tracts, pref. p. x.

|| Gibbon, iii. 20, notes.

"As for the pretence of this article being the foundation of spiritual tyranny, this is not true; for history and experience testify, that those who have erected schemes of tyranny did not find it sufficient for their purpose, but were forced to build upon additions of their own, such as transubstantiation, purgatory, the custody of the keys: our modern seducers of the populace pretend to extraordinary illuminations, peculiar providences, and wonder-working powers, and Mahometism, that religion propagated by the sword, totally rejects the Trinity for this notable reason, because there cannot be a son without a mother as well as father. Perhaps nobody was ever hurt barely by his reception of the creeds, how erroneously soever he may have understood them: it is the stir made about them, that does the mischief. Any speculative point, as the individuality of compounds, or super-addition of a new existence upon their conjunction, might raise as great disturbances as the disputes between Athanasius and Arius, if once warmly espoused as a matter of state, or taken up for a party distinction."*

NOTE F. p. 21.

ATHEISM.

That these expressions about Atheism, are not too strong, let the following authorities show:

Lord Bacon, gives us an opinion, from what he saw in his day. "If this bridle," (i. e. "the fear of government and of speech amongst men," from which last, it has in our day pretty nearly emancipated itself,) "If this bridle were removed, there is no heresy, that would contend more, to spread and multiply and disseminate itself abroad, than Atheism."

Works, Montagu. Edit. i. 216.

Bp. Blomfield, who is well acquainted with London, which has bred all sorts of radicalism and infidelity, tells us, that "an intolerant and persecuting spirit, is the never-failing characteristic, of the Atheist and the leveller."

B. on the Acts. p. 45. 2d edition.

The Abbe Bergier, who was familiar with France, holds the following language, at the close of his article on the Inquisition. "We congratulate the French and Germans, that they have not the tribunal among them; but we confidently assure them, that if *unbelieving philosophers*, had the mastery, they would establish an inquisition, as rigorous as that of Spain, against all, who would persevere in attachment to religion." *Theol. Dict. iv. 215.*

Hear Robert Hall. "It was late, before the Atheism of Epicurus, gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence, was soon followed, by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were *then*, unparalleled in the history of the world." "An attempt has been recently made, to establish a similar system in France, the consequences of which, are too well known, to render it requisite, for me to shock your feelings by a recital." *Works. i. 46. Eng. Edit.* "They are eager to displace a Deity, from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void: to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins." i. 41.

* Tucker's *Light*, &c. iii. 259.

Hear even Voltaire. "I would not willingly, lie at the mercy of an Atheistical prince, who might think it his interest, to have me pounded in a mortar, for I am very certain, that would be my fate. And were I a sovereign, I would not have about me, any Atheistical courtiers, whose interest it might be to poison me, as then, I must every day be taking alexipharmics. So necessary is it, both for princes and people, that their minds be thoroughly imbued with an idea of a Supreme Being, the Creator, Avenger, and Rewarder.

Phil. Dict. i. 31. *Edit.* 1819.

We close this series, with the following.

"Upon the whole, as the world within the compass of a few years past, is advanced in all kinds of knowledge and arts, and every useful branch, of what they knew before is improved, and innumerable useful parts of knowledge, which were concealed before, are discovered: why should we think, the Devil alone, should stand at a stay, take no steps to his farther accomplishment, and make no useful discoveries, in his way? That he alone, should stand at a stay, and be just the same *unimproved* Devil, that he was before? No: No: as the world is improved every day, and every age is grown wiser and wiser, than their fathers, so no doubt, he has bestirred himself too, in order to an increase of knowledge and discovery, and that he finds every day, a nearer way to go to work with mankind, than he had before."

History of the Devil. 321, 322.

NOTE G, p. 26.

That this *original sin* of Arius, lost nothing by transmission, two or three authorities, not to mention others, can clearly evince. Says Severus, "*Ariani, perfidiam suam occultabant, non ausi palam, erroris sua dogmata, predicare.*" Sulp. Severus Hist. Sac. Lib. ii. Many of the Orthodox bishops, as we are assured by Theodoret, (Lib. ii. ch. 21.) were carried by the Arians, from the council of Rimini, to Nice in Thrace, there detained, and *cheated* into an acknowledgment of an Arian creed. And this assurance, comes from a man, whom Du Pin, (cent. v. pt. 2. p. 64.) has to defend from the charge, of writing history, for the *abuse of the Orthodox!* Of Eunomius, thus writes Ceillier, in his Hist. Aut. Sacres: "*Il suivit ce conceil et enveloppa son impiété d'une multitude de termes obscurs et embarrasses.*" Vol. xiv. p. 84.

NOTE H, p. 30.

MORAL QUALIFICATIONS OF AN INTERPRETER.

We have spoken strongly, on this subject, in the text, and as some may think, our observations ought to be better fortified, the following list of authorities is subjoined.

"For we believe, that to be true, which some have affirmed, that were there any interest of life, any concernment of appetite and passion, against the truth of *geometrical theorems* themselves, (as e. g. of a triangles' having its three

angles, equal to two right angles,) whereby men's judgments might be clouded and bribed; notwithstanding all the demonstrations of them, many would remain, at least skeptical about them." — *Pref. to Cudworth's Intell. Syst.*

"The *will*, is one of the principal sources of belief; not that it produces belief, but that *things* appear true or false to us, according to the way they are looked at. The will which inclines to one thing, more than another, turns away the mind, from considering the qualities of that, which it does not approve; and thus, the whole mind, led by the will or inclination, limits observation, to what it approves, and thus forming its judgment, on what it sees, it insensibly regulates its belief, by the inclinations of the will, i. e. its own preferences."

Pascal's Thoughts, p. 20. *Craig's edition.*

"It would be well, if people would not lay so much weight, on their own reason, in matters of religion, as to think everything impossible and incredible, which *they* cannot conceive. How often do we contradict the right rules of reason, in the whole course of our lives? Reason *itself*, is true and just, but the reason of *every particular man*, is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his passions, his interests, and his vices. Let any man but consider, when he hath a controversy with another, though his cause be ever so unjust, though the whole world be against him, how blinded he is, by the love of himself, to believe that wrong is right, and right is wrong, when it makes for his own advantage. Where is then the right use of this reason, which he so much boasts of, and which he would blasphemously set up, to control the commands of the Almighty." — *Dean Swift's Sermon on the Trinity*, pronounced by Bp. Gleig, (Letters p. 203.) the best popular sermon on the subject, he ever saw.

"Thus, good people, should we understand such matters, expressed in the Divine Scriptures, that the holy table of God's word, be not turned to us, to be a snare, a trap, and a stumbling stone, to take hurt, by the abuse of our understanding." — *Homily, 22. pt. 1. An information to them, which take offence, at certain places of the holy Scripture.*

In his last hours, said Bp. Butler to his chaplain, "Though I have endeavored to avoid sin, and to please God, to the utmost of my power, yet from the consciousness of perpetual infirmity, I am still afraid to die." "My Lord," said the chaplain, "you forget that Jesus Christ is a Saviour." "True," was the answer, "but how shall I know, that he is a Saviour to me?" "My Lord, it is written, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'" "True," said the bishop, "and I am surprised, that though I have read that Scripture, a thousand times, I never felt its value till this moment: and now I die happy."

Chr. Disc. N. S. i. 368.

One of the most important of the moral qualifications of an interpreter, is, a *sympathy* with what he is to interpret. Here was a passage, without "ambiguity," but until the proper sympathy with it, was awakened in the bishop's mind, it was dark or of no striking significance to him. When that sympathy came, then came spiritual discernment and spiritual appreciation. The simple proposition, "Jesus Christ is a Saviour," will be a bare and cold historical fact, to all who have not due convictions and feelings about those sins, which make a Saviour necessary. When a man can enter, *with his heart*, into the language of our sacramental confession, "the remembrance of them, is grievous unto us,

the burthen of them, is intolerable," *then*, and not till then, will he know how to interpret, the apparently unambiguous proposition, which has been instanced.

To proceed : — "How zealously and earnestly, they ply the people, with the great duty of searching the Scriptures, and yet, all the world cannot persuade them, either to believe or hear those Scriptures, though speaking never so plainly, against their erroneous practices."

Nelson's Countermine, p. 26.

"Several, stamp the characters of Divinity, on an idol which the fancy has set up, and wonder, that all mankind do not fall down and worship it. Every slight argument that countenances it, is demonstration, and every one that opposes it, is a palpable fallacy. They see it in every text of Scripture, and are surprised at the unaccountable blindness of other people, that they do not see it too."

Seed's Sermons, iii. 110.

"For how great soever his acquisitions are, of speculative knowledge, the corruptions of the heart, will certainly, sooner or later, seduce and corrupt the mind."

Du Pin's Study of Theology. p. 103.

"Were the minds of all men alike, and rightly disposed, all arguments and reasons, would work alike upon them all. But interest, partiality, pride, and other ungovernable affections, cause all the disorders in the mind."

Hon. C. How's Meditations No. 22.

"Scripture, like everything else, is liable to very extraordinary interpretations; and when men enter upon the study of it, with a disposition to search into mysteries, or with a prepossession for any peculiar set of tenets, and a desire to establish these, in preference to every other, they no doubt may run into the most extravagant imaginations, and find in the words of God himself something like a color, for all the perversions and follies of their own disordered mind."

R. Morehead's Sermons, Episcopal Chapel Edinburgh. p. 16.

"There is but one precise point, to show a picture in : the rest, misrepresent by nearness or distance, by being too high or too low. Perspective, will tell us this nice place in *painting*; but in *thinking* and *morality*, it is not so easily fixed. Things are often mismarked, both in contemplation and use, for want of application and integrity."

Jer. Collier's Essays. i. 240.

"Many qualifications are requisite, in order to judge of some truths, and particularly those, which are of the greatest importance : proper learning and penetration, vacancy from business, a detachment from the interest of all parties, much sincerity, and a perfect resignation to the government of reason and force of truth."

Wollaston's Rel. of Nat. Edit. 6th. p. 62.

"Reason, that divinity of philosophers, totters, is frequently driven from her throne, and even deserts those, who have most cultivated her friendship, and acknowledged her power."

Lord Lyttleton's Lett. p. 20, 21.

"Truth, is a thing, which every man is ready to declare for, and thinks, he, has its sure possession. But then, it must be in his own little sphere, though ever so contemptible, a hut or house. He must never look abroad, or go out of doors for it. Every monster of imagination, in his own cell is truth."

Morgan's Physico-Theology p. 269.

Little did this Infidel, like many others, think that his positions were as applicable to himself as to those against whom he wrote. A principle, is always *general*, and a principle of the science of Interpretation, one of the *most general* things in the world: and yet, even this science is not protected from monopolizing and *one sided* views:—a proof almost complete, if there were no other, that the moral qualifications of an interpreter, are matters of the first moment, and to be looked to, before any other qualifications whatever.

Behold another Infidel, unconsciously committing *felo de se*, when he thinks *only*, of slaying his Christian neighbor. "There is indisputably an influence, exerted by emotions and passions, over the understanding itself. They have sometimes the effect, of making that argument appear valid to one man, which is regarded as inconclusive by another; in a word, of begetting various opinions on the same subject." *Essays on Formation of Opinions*, p. 48.

From something which we have lately seen written by the celebrated continental scholar, De Wette, it would seem, as if he were verging to such views of the qualifications of an interpreter, as have here been defended.

And now, after showing the necessity of proper moral qualifications for an interpreter, we might still go on and say, that without these same qualifications, even correctly interpreted Scripture is of little use. "Suppose a man," says Pascal, "to become convinced, that the proportions of numbers, are truths immaterial, (i. e. existing independently of matter,) and external, and dependent on one first truth, on which they subsist, and which is called God: I do not find that man, advanced one step further, towards his own salvation."

Thoughts pp. 57, 58. or *Chap.* vii.

There is what is called, a speculative belief in Christianity. But there are persons, in whose minds such a belief lies as inert and unfruitful, as do certain seeds in the ground, when more heat and moisture than usual, is necessary to make them germinate. So their Christianity, (if it be Christianity,) requires the dew of a divine blessing, and the warmth of a faith "that works by love," to make it vital and operative. Compare Rom. ii. 28, 29. *

NOTE. I. p. 31.

UNLEARNED INTERPRETERS.

We cannot help referring here, to Mr. N.'s chosen example, both in his review and book, (and which, of course, we think a very carefully selected one,) as far from being particularly happy. "Ye have an unction, from the Holy One, and ye know all things." 1 John ii. 20. This, is the ambiguous passage, which is to show how easily common readers may and will mistake, the sense of Scripture. — We confess it to be an ambiguous passage, to the cavilling and querulous theologian. But to one, who had practically and powerfully felt,

* Le Bas's Sermons, ii. 244.—Quarterly Review, xvii. 459.

the influence of Christianity, (i. e. in common parlance, a truly converted man,) we really think, the *sentiment* of the passage, its oriental costume out of the question, remarkably plain.

John had been speaking, of Anti-christs. They went out from his brethren, left the fellowship of Christians; because they were not of them, had no genuine fellow-feeling with them. But ye, (there is a contrast in the disjunctive, which every unlearned interpreter would *feel*, little as he might know of the mysteries of "ambiguity,") but ye do, — what? Obviously, — do not go out. And why? Ye have an unction, from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

We are confident, with a persuasion "free from all doubt and difficulty," that a right Christian heart, a mind prepared with the proper *moral qualifications*, would interpret the *sentiment* here, correctly, and without hesitation; though unskilled in the dubitations and tortuosities of "ambiguity." Nay, we will go further, we believe, it would come to a true decision, *the sooner*, for this very want of skill. We do not think, after all, that language is such an extremely uncertain medium, for the communication of thought.

The knowledge of what words *may* mean, is not most helpful, in our humble estimation. It makes many *oscillate*, in a manner, amusing to mere curiosity, but afflicting to anxious philanthropy. It has troubled the world, with men, who have "piled up reluctant quarto upon solid folio, as if their labors, because they are gigantic, could contend with truth and heaven."* An *honest man*, means *one thing*, by language: it is only *deceivers*, who mean *many things*, or *nothing*, by it. "It is saying little," says the powerful author, of the late work on fanaticism, "to affirm, that no composition, whether historical or didactic, (if the language in which it is written be understood,) fails to convey to readers, of ordinary intelligence, the *principal intention* of the writer; unless indeed, he be himself wanting in sense, or designedly conceals his meaning, under ambiguous or enigmatic terms. This is plainly implied, when it is granted, that language is a good and sufficient means of communication, between mind and mind. To affirm any thing less, were to stultify humanity, and to break up and derange, the entire machinery of the social system. All men, might as well become anchorets at once, if indeed language is found to be a fallacious medium of intellectual exchange."†

This seems to us, so much like a concatenation of axioms, (as no doubt it did to its author,) that but for the singular views, about the intrinsic ambiguity of language, which have been obtruded on us, we should never have sought, for such propositions as it contains, the authority of a great reputation. We say *singular*, not because we doubt, any more than Mr. N. does, that words are, in themselves considered, intrinsically ambiguous. We have never doubted this fact, since we were taught it in college, in different phraseology, viz. that words are arbitrary signs of ideas. But we fear, that the term "intrinsic," has been used, with an emphasis and a frequency, which has made it convertible for another, quite dissimilar, viz. "invariable." We do fear, that Mr. N.'s declamation about intrinsic ambiguity, will help some to doubt, some to speculate, some to evade, and some to be indifferent, *because*, they will think, that which is intrinsically ambiguous, is *always* ambiguous; — a conclu-

* From Junius' Letters, No. xx.

† Fanaticism, p. 243.

sion, not one whit more strange to us, than are to him, the, "to the last degree extravagant and absurd," conclusions of Paulus, which in his view, have no equals, but Orthodox commentaries!*

We well know, as Dr. Beattie has taught us, that "it is easy to write plausibly, on any subject, and in vindication of any doctrine, when either the indolence of the reader, or the nature of the composition, gives the writer an opportunity, to avail himself, of the *ambiguity of language*."† But we trust, that it is not necessary, to prove the sacred writers, *honest* men, who would mean but *one* thing: and we believe, that no *sincere* inquirer after their meaning, will be indolent. How then, can the ambiguity of language, be *so very* troublesome, to such an inquirer? — We cannot think it will be. If the writers of the Bible, had a "principal intention;" then, if one only have a spirit in sympathy with theirs, i. e. the right moral qualification, he will catch this "intention," sooner, vastly sooner, than the most learned of explorers, who are wandering up and down, seeking for it in the *mists* of words and phrases, which they themselves have created. It is easier, than is imagined, for a man to transfer the cloudiness of his own brain, to the page he is reading: to think, when his own heart is out of tune, that the discord exists in what his heart does not chime with. But, when there is harmony between what is written, and the mind and heart, which come in contact with it; *then*, as in water face answereth to face, so the mind sees and the heart feels what is written, just as he who wrote, meant they should do. — To us, this is a subject, which we think as plain, as others will think it "ambiguous." There are "babes," to whom it is intelligible, and there are "wise and prudent," from whom, in relation to the Bible, it may "be hidden." But we shall be none the less "fully persuaded," of the correctness and simplicity of our views, about the unambiguous character of the language of *honest* men, guided by the Spirit of all truth, when studied by *sincere* and *anxious* men, whose hearts, the same Spirit has attuned to unison, with the language they study. This, is a position, which even violence shall not wring from us. We will never consent, to have the humble, unlettered, but genuine Christian, shaken in his faith, and injured in his hopes, by the illusive "statement," that language intrinsically, means any thing or means nothing, and that *therefore*, he must surrender at discretion, to the *dicta* of the self-styled wise.§ No, we tell him, he may even put them at defiance, and fearlessly follow a *sanctified heart*. Such a heart will lead him into all truth, when without it, the wisdom of Solomon might but "lead to bewilder."||

"He that believeth," i. e. gives God *all* his confidence, before man, man's reason, or any thing below, "hath the witness in himself." Ought it not, to be so? Ought not God to bless him, who will trust himself, *exclusively*, with a degree of light and conviction, which he withholds from others? Ought not

* Ch. Disc. N. S. i. 410.

† Essay on Truth, Pt. I. chap. ii. Sect. 9.

‡ Horne's Introd. 4th Lond. edition, ii. 493. or Int. to Pt. ii. ch. 1.

§ "Whoever is wise, in the history of human science; or with philosophic mind, has traced the characters of the learned, has frequently discovered, that *erudition*, with all its industry, is often more remote from truth, than *ignorance* with all its stupidity; and that while the learned, outstrip the vulgar in knowledge, their own prejudice often outstrips their own knowledge."

Dr. Fletcher on Rel. Controversy, pp. 91, 92.

|| Horsley's Nine Sermons, pp. 165, 6.

a heart, which is not so foolish as to trust in itself, to be able to adopt, with *philosophical* truth, the words of Dante?

"The flood, I answered, from the Spirit of God,
Rained down, upon the Cov'nants old and new:
Here, is the reasoning, that convinceth me
So feelingly: each argument beside,
Seems blunt and forceless, in comparison."

Paradise, Canto xxiv. 96—100. Carey's Translation, slightly altered.

NOTE K. p. 33.

RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, — FREE ENQUIRY &c.

We were once present, at the delivery of an oration by a distinguished personage, who seized an opportunity to dilate on these topics, with enthusiastic fervor. His remarks were welcomed with vociferous applause, — clapping — stamping &c.

"I presume," said a dry country parson sitting near us, "I presume Sir, it is the *most pious* part of the audience, who are expressing their joy on this occasion."

NOTE L. p. 38.

THE PROTESTANT VATICAN.

Protestants complain, of the decrees of the Vatican: must it at last be said to them, "thou that preachest, a man should not steal" infallibility, "dost thou, steal" it? — And yet, we are at times almost tempted to exclaim, "Behold! a greater than" the Vatican "is here."

For in the first place, we may have no principles of interpretation, which can be even defended. (p. 88.)

Should we however survive this deprivation, and attempt to interpret the Bible for ourselves, in the honest exercise of "the right of private judgment," we are reduced to the verge of syncope, by the drastic dose, that, mean the Bible what it may, "its Trinitarian exposition must be false." (p. 105.)

Should any strength be yet left us, and we attempt to lisp, that the Bible correctly interpreted, contains Trinitarian doctrines, we are made "twice dead, plucked up by the roots," by the *decretum absolutum*, "Oh no! these are not the doctrines of the gospel."* — Most truly, if we can have no principles of interpretation; — if our interpretations, when attempted, must all be wrong; — if what we declare to be in Scripture, cannot be found there; — we see not, how we could be in worse plight, under the ban of the successors of St. Peter. This "statement," quite throws into shade, the Bull Unigenitus, which nullified but one hundred and one propositions. It nullifies our every possible proposition, and is an Interdict, with a vengeance!

* Ch. Disc. N. S. i. 430. The "cool and dispassionate" impression, with which Mr. Yates, closes his Vindication of Unitarianism, is, "that if it be not *certain*, that the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, is false, there is an end of all religion, and no certainty upon any subject." — Vind. p. 284.

Well has Chillingworth said: "He that would usurp an absolute lordship over any people, need not put himself, to the trouble and difficulty of abrogating and annulling the laws made to maintain the common liberty, for he may frustrate their intent, compass his design, as well, if he can get power and authority, to *interpret them as he pleases*, and *add to them what he pleases*, and *to have his interpretations and additions, stand for laws*: if he can rule his people by his laws, and his laws by his lawyers." *

We care little for our Protestantism, if it discharge us from one thralldom; but to enslave us to a second. If we *must* have an *infallible dictator*, † it matters little whether he reside at Rome or at Cambridge: for,

"It is a poor relief we gain,
To change the place and keep the pain."

Are we to go back to the days of Du Moulin, and with him say: "A prodigious thing, that sinners and guilty persons, will take upon them to be infallible judges of the sense of the laws, which concern their crimes and offences; that sinful men should be judges of that word, by the which, at the latter day, they shall be judged! This, is to subject religion unto men; whereas men should be subject to religion."

Du Moulin's Buckler of the Faith. pp. 25, 26. Oxford, 1620.

NOTE M. p. 42.

THE UNITY OF GOD.

Notwithstanding the admonitions, upon the *supposed* simplicity of this subject, given by Bp. Horsley‡ and Mr. Stuart,§ it may be thought, that the positions of the text, need further aid. The following authorities, are therefore quoted. Says Dugald Stuart, "the existence of a Deity, does not seem to be an intuitive truth."|| If then, we have to reason out, even God's *existence*, much more must it take a longer process to learn his *nature*.

But this "nature," says Arminius, "cannot be known *a priori*."¶ "If," says Locke, "you do not understand, the operations of your own finite mind, that thinking thing within you, do not think it strange, that you cannot comprehend the operations of that Eternal Infinite Mind, who made and governs all things, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain."*** "We may know that there is a God," says Pascal, "without knowing *what he is*."††

Such authorities as these, may teach us *generally*, that the deductions of reason about the internal character of the Godhead, must partake of that *dimness*, into which, says Dr. Ware, our mortal vision is not penetrating enough to go.

* Chillingworth's Works, i. 197.

† Le Clerc perhaps, brought the Popery of Toleration into such repute, as to stimulate imitators. He was thought to aim, at "the Inquisitor-generalship in the republic of Letters." — Biog. Universelle, xxiii. 515.

‡ Tracts, pp. 286, 7.

§ Letters, pp. 36, 7. 1st edition.

|| Phil. Act. and Mor. Powers, Book iii. chap. 1.

¶ Nichols' Arminius, ii. 112. So said Plato, vid. Enfield's Hist. Phil. i. 226.

*** Essay, Book iv. chap. 10. § 19.

†† Thoughts, chap. 7.

We come now to the specific subject, of what is called the Divine Unity, as a part of this internal character. We say, "what is called," remembering the language of the "heretic" Tucker, who is so unfortunate, as to let slip the declaration, that "Unity" is a coined word, as well as "Person," and "Trinity:" * a declaration, which we believe to be no less true than impartial.

Of course, if our Unitarian friends, stickle too much *for*, or strive too much *against* words of human manufacture, they must find themselves at as great a stand, as others are gratuitously decreed to be. We will imagine them then, content to let the matter of coined words pass; albeit we do not tell them, that if words are so highly "ambiguous," they can with an ill grace complain of those, who now and then make one, with at least the honest endeavor, of avoiding the consequences of this serious imperfection.

In reference then to proof from reason, of *what is called* the Unity, we appeal first, to an authority, whom some perhaps will little expect to hear cited, *scilicet*, Mr. Hume. "Were one Deity antecedently proved," says he, "who were possessed of every attribute, requisite to the production of the Universe, it would be needless, I own, *but not absurd*, to suppose any other Deity existent. But while it is still a question: Whether all these attributes, are united in one subject, or dispersed among several independent beings; by what phenomenon shall we decide the controversy?"† We might quote much more from him, if necessary.

If so acute a mind as Hume's, could see no more luminous proofs of the essence of Divinity, in Nature, it is not wonderful, that such minds as Paley's and Dr. Brown's, should not be more discerning. It is somewhat entertaining, in relation to Paley, to find him, with that faculty of *seeing double*, possessed by some, now claimed as a Unitarian, and now accredited as Orthodox. Dr. Channing, esteeming him valuable as a *retainer*, on his side of the question,‡ looks upon him as a "decided Unitarian." Mr. Yates, discovering him to be *a bad witness*, for the Unity of God as taught by reason, can discover him, only in the ranks of Orthodoxy.§ Dr. Brown, we presume will not be deemed his associate, in this last position, and yet he unequivocally says, that an attempt to prove the absolute and necessary Unity of God, from the light of Nature, is "at best, only a laborious trifling with words."||

We might go further and adduce the testimony of theologians, for we have before us, references to Van Mastricht, Synop. Pur. Theologiae, Calvin, Leighton, Gleig, Storr, Pye Smith, Nares, Dwight, Shuttleworth, to say nothing of what might be gleaned, from such writers as Bæthius and Grotius, Addison and How, to whose pages we have also guides: we hope, not altogether "ambiguous." But here, we at present rest.

In closing this note, we cannot but express a little astonishment, at the confidence, with which some have dogmatized upon the subject of Unity. "The Unity of God," says a controversial writer, "is a simple, indivisible, and perfect Unity." Such language, of course implies, that there is a Unity, which is not simple, which is divisible, which is imperfect, i. e. in other words, that after all, Unity is but a *relative* thing. Here then, we ask, how *he* knows that the

* Light of Nature, iii. 260.

† Phil. Works, ii. 471.

‡ Letter to Thacher, p. 24.

§ Yates' Vindication, p. 147.

|| Brown's Philos. iii. 449.

Unity of God, is *such a sort* of Unity, as he positively affirms it to be? In order to be competent, to such an affirmation, he must be intimately acquainted, with *all* the sorts of Unity in existence, and so intimately acquainted with the internal nature of God, as to know that one, and one only, of these Unities, belongs to him: and thus, to put his finger, upon the *precise* one, which belongs to God, he must know scarcely less than the Supreme Being himself.* At any rate, before he can speak oracularly, upon this subject, he must know, what Unity *in the abstract* is. And now we ask: what is Unity, in the abstract? We do not even pretend to know, and think, that any modest man, might pause and falter, before the conclusion of such a mind as Plato's: "Unity can neither be named, nor spoken of, nor conceived by opinion, nor be known, nor perceived by any being."† And shall we dogmatize, upon such a tenuous and intangible subject, in relation to a nature, "higher than heaven — deeper than hell — longer than the earth — broader than the sea?" Rather, doth it not become us to feel as did Klopstock's Eloa, who had been attempting to fathom the mysteries of the Godhead, and who expressed the result, thus sublimely.

"To the First of beings, to him whom no name can express, no thought conceive, I have just soared; desiring to see him face to face, in all his tremendous glory. I reached the suns, that gild the radiant path to heaven, and they were dimmed. I then ascended to the celestial throne, where darkness progressive, deepened beyond darkness; but no words can express the depth of the sable cloud, in which the Eternal was involved, nor the awful terrors, with which he was environed. I stood, amid the profound repose of the fair creation. I sunk prostrate, adoring the great Omnipotent in silence."‡

Metaphysics, as it appears to us, dwindle to an infinitesimal meagreness, when brought into competition with a being, to whom such language is applicable, for the purpose of measuring his dimensions, or sounding his essence. We may be thought too yielding, and be told perhaps, that we add to the perplexity of our contemplations, when directed towards God. If so, we shall reply in the language of Necker: "What becomes in IMMENSITY, of that insignificant phrase; *It is one difficulty more?*"

Necker on Religious Opinions. 165.

NOTE N. p. 45.

VANITY OF PHILOSOPHIZING.

Dr. Priestley, would have us believe, that the philosophizing, against which the sacred writers level censure, was introduced by the Gnostics, but Tittman, teaches us, that there are no traces of Gnostic philosophy in the New Testament. We apprehend, one need not go to a sect, for the origin of this propensity: it is as universal, as human nature. "Vanity," says Pascal, "is so rooted in the heart of man, that the lowest drudge of the camp, the street or the kitchen, must have his boast and his admirers. *It is the same with the philosophers.*"§

* He must beyond question have attained that elevation to which Lucifer could but aspire. — See Isaiah xiv. 13, 14.

† Taylor's Plato, iii. 161. also Bp. Berkley's Works, i. 29.

‡ Messiah, Book IX.

§ Thoughts, chap. 2.

Bacon, complains of this vanity as infecting pretended students of Nature, not less than theologians. "For," he says, "as in the inquiry of divine truth, the pride of man, hath ever inclined to leave the oracles of God's *word*, and to vanish in the mixture of their own inventions, so in the self-same manner, in inquisition of Nature, they have ever left the oracles of God's *works*, and adored the deceiving and deformed imagery, which the unequal mirrors of their own minds, have represented unto them. Nay, it is a point fit and necessary, in the front and beginning of this work, without hesitation or reserve to be professed, that it is no less true, in this human kingdom of knowledge, than in God's kingdom of heaven, that no man shall enter it 'except he become first as a little child.'"^{*} "Glory and curiosity," says Montaigne, "are the scourges of the soul: of which the last, prompts us to thrust our noses into everything, and the other, forbids us to leave anything doubtful and undecided."[†] Much might be written on this subject, but it must be a graphic pen indeed, which can inculcate lessons about it, so beautifully, so expressively, so almost divinely, as is done, in two philosophical parables, in the first twenty-seven verses of the 4th chapter, of the second book of Esdras, and to which the reader is referred. May the *proper limits of theological research*,[‡] become a less strange thought, and a less novel expression, than it now is, to too many. Then, we may hope to see return upon us, that happy period, of which Schroeckh thus speaks, in his compendious history of the Church: "Felix certe eo numine, Ecclesia hujus ævi fuit, quod, *vix ulli* doctorum, auderent *placita sua mandatis divinis, venditare*; omnes autem, *summam religionis, ad sacrarum literarum auctoritatem* revocarent." *Hist. Religionis.* p. 90. 6th edition.

"We live in a strange age," says an old statesman, "when every one, is in love with his own fancy, as Narcissus was with his face, and this is, *true spiritual pride*, the usherer in of all confusions. The Lord deliver us from it; and grant we may possess our souls with patience, till the great wheel of Providence turn up another spoke, that may point at peace and unanimity, among poor mortals. In these hopes I rest."

Howell's Famil. Letters. Book. iv. Lett. 29. London 1678.

NOTE O. p. 47.

IDENTITY OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION.

Great names, have led to mistakes, on this subject. There are at present, three such names, which seem to be quoted, with peculiar zest, — Newton's Locke's, and Milton's. But of the first, we hold it no heresy to say, in the language of Davies, "There may be some truth also, in what another foreigner has said, that in some of his theological writings, Newton has made amends unto mankind, for his superiority to them in other respects. There is still more truth, in what his own learned editor said of him, that in the science of quantity, he was unequalled, but that in matters of religious inquiry, he was but one of the people. It has been remarked by Gibbon, that the study of the

^{*} Works, Montag. edition i. 267.

[†] Essays, i. 320. edition 1685.

[‡] See Book i. of Davies' Estimate of the Mind.

mathematics has a strong tendency, by the habits of thought which it induces to incapacitate the mind, for the nice perception and correct appreciation of moral evidence. It can be matter of just surprise to none, therefore, that a man, whose mighty faculties were so absorbed in the investigations of that science, as were those of Newton, should have failed to attain, to a correct view of a system, whose evidence, from the very nature of the things, can never be made to assume the form of mathematical demonstration." * We hold it to be no heresy to say as much, and to say further, that *his* mind suffered, as his fellow philosopher declares too many minds have done, "from the intermingling and tempering with one another; of Divine and human knowledge." And the more confident are we in our position, when Newton's philosophy is quoted in behalf of Anti-Trinitarianism, since we are assured by Whiston, that Newton was irreconcilably angry with him, for calling him an Arian. †— As to Locke's Anti-Trinitarianism we find it *somewhat hard* to admit it, when in his second Vindication of the "Reasonableness of Christianity," Wks. vii. 417, he tell us, it is *very hard* for a Christian, who reads the Scriptures with attention, and an unprejudiced mind, to deny *the satisfaction of Christ*. And for Milton's, strange as might have been many of his notions, it does seem to us *liberal* interpretation, in at least the comparative degree, to quote his testimony against Orthodoxy; when in relation to his advocacy of a doctrine *pre-eminently incredible*, it was said of him by the celebrated Mr. Erskine, at the trial of Cheetham: "The mysterious Incarnation, of our blessed Saviour, (which this work blasphemes, in words so wholly unfit, for the mouth of a Christian, or for the ear of a court of justice, that I dare not and will not give them utterance,) Milton, made the grand conclusion of the *Paradise Lost*, the rest from his finished labors, and the ultimate hope, expectation, and glory of world."

We say these things, contemplating with no diminutive wonder, the strained efforts of some, to magnify *human* authorities, ‡ when but yesterday, as it were, it was the fashion to lessen and to decry them: — nay, "*none so poor as to do them reverence.*" How long is it since we have been told, that the inflexible decrees and symbols of councils, were worth no more than the parchment or paper upon which they were engrossed? And shall we now be silenced by the very tensile decrees and symbols of astronomers, metaphysicians, and poets?

Ah! says Montaigne; "Methinks philosophy has never so fair a game to play, as when it falls upon our vanity and presumption, when it most lays open their irresolution, weakness and ignorance. I look upon the too good opinion man has of himself, to be the nursing mother of all the most false, both public and private opinions. Those people, *who ride astride on the epicycle of Mercury*, who see so far into the heavens, are worse to me than a tooth-drawer that comes to draw my teeth: for in my study, the subject of which is man, finding so great a variety of judgments, so great a labyrinth of difficulties, one upon another, so great diversity and uncertainty, even in the school of wisdom itself; you may judge, seeing those people, could not resolve upon the knowledge of themselves, and their own condition, which is continually before their eyes, and within them; seeing they do not know how that moves, which they

* Davies' Estimate of the Mind, Vol. i. pp. 146, 147.

† Simpson's Plon, p. 26.

‡ The supposed Unitarianism, of Newton, Locke, and Milton, forms the subject of a Tract! See No. 77, of the Tracts of the Am. Unit. Association, Nov. 1833.

themselves move; nor how to give us a description of the springs they themselves govern and make use of; how can I believe them, about the ebbings and flowings of the Nile! The curiosity of knowing things, has been given to man for a scourge, says Holy Scripture."* — But why a diatribe against philosophy, it may be asked by multitudes, who are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge," of the conservative truth, "*medio tutissimus ibis*?" Shall we adopt, they cry, the exploded maxim, "ignorance is the mother of devotion?" — He is a calumniator, who draws such inferences from our pages. He is a wilful and malign misinterpreter, who says, we scout philosophy, and who would therefore bring our arguments into discredit, by insinuating that we dare not or will not have a mind of our own, and follow through fear, or with hypocrisy, or for gain, "the beaten track." No: we disesteem not philosophy. To be sure, we would not dwell upon her *unrivalled* excellence, like some mistaken chanters of its praise, and let her usurp a dominion, which was never assigned her, and which she may convert, unless we misconceive omens, into general and detestable tyranny. We would only tell her, as a plain old-fashioned writer, told certain mistresses of other days, who were disposed to be peeping into the families of their neighbors, to be "a keeper at home." Then, we shall hold her, is as "reverend estimation," as a Lady Abbess, would be held in, by the scrupulous Catholic, within the walls of a convent.†

"The Church," says Chateaubriand, "has never spoken with such severity, against philosophic studies, as the various philosophers whom we have quoted. If she be accused of having looked rather coldly upon that knowledge, which, to use the words of Seneca, *cures us of nothing*, you must also condemn that multitude of legislators, statesmen, and moralists, who, in every age, have protested more strongly than she has done, against the danger, the uncertainty, and the obscurity of the sciences. — Where shall she discover truth? Is she to seek it in Locke, so highly extolled by Condillac? in Leibnitz, who deemed Locke so weak in metaphysics? or in Kant, who now attacks both Locke and Condillac? Shall she take up the maxims of Minos, Lycurgus, Cato, Rousseau, who banish the sciences from their republics? or adopt the opinion of the legislators, by whom they are tolerated? What dreadful lessons, if she but looks around her! What an ample subject for reflection, in that well known history of the *tree of knowledge which produces death*! The ages of philosophy, have invariably bordered upon the ages of destruction."‡

And yet, we are told, that religion is in a crude undeveloped state, and that it must be taken from the hands of poor mismanaging divines, and entrusted to philosophers, who will bring it forth in all its glory, like the sun from an eclipse. We doubt it. We utterly doubt it. Cost what it may, and it will probably cost enough to say so, we fear we are incorrigible heretics, under the deep cloud, to use the Roman Catholic phrase, of "invincible ignorance," respecting this very fashionable opinion. It is to us, (*πατάξον μὲν, ἀκούσον δὲ,*) it is to us, little better than sing-song. With the firmly persuaded author of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm," we can go hand in hand, and say, "True Religion, unlike human science, was given to mankind in a finished

* Essays, ii. 484, 5.

† Each might his several province well command,
Would all but stoop, to what they understand. — Pope.

‡ Beauties of Christianity, p. 301.

form, and is to be learned, not improved: and though the most capacious human mind is nobly employed, while concentrating all its vigor upon the acquirement of this documentary learning, it is very fruitlessly and very perniciously occupied in giving it a single touch of perfectionment."* To enquirers, we should ever give the advice of the saintly Leighton: "Whatever you do, with regard to other studies, give always the preference to sacred Christian philosophy; which is, indeed, the chief philosophy, and has the pre-eminence over every other science, because it holds Christ *to be the head*, in whom, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid."† And for ourselves we desire no better motto, than the profession of Sir Thomas Brown, in his *Religio Medici*: "In philosophy, where truth seems double-faced, there is no man more paradoxical than myself. But in divinity, I love to keep the road; and though not in an implicit, yet an humble faith, follow the great wheel of the Church, by which I move, not reserving any proper poles or motion, from the epicycle of my own brain. — In brief, where the Scripture is silent, the Church is my text: where that speaks, 'tis but my comment: where there is a joint silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my religion from Rome or Geneva, but follow the dictates of my own reason."§

To those who think this subject deserving further investigation, the following references may perhaps be of some service.

Hey's Lectures. Book iv. Art. i. § 16.

Powell's Discourses. Hughe's Edition p. 211.

Bonnet's Inquiries. Phila. 1803. p. 296, 7.

Diodati sur le Christianisme. pp. 57, 58.

R. Morehead's Sermons p. 15.

Rollin's Belles Lett. iii. 306.

Bp. Hurd's Works. viii. 121. — Quarterly Review, xxx iii. 356. &c.

Christian Obs. 1819. p. 494.

Bp. Berkley's Minute Philosopher, *last two* chapters.

Tittmanni Opusc. p. 565. &c.

Prof. Lee's Six Sermons &c. pp. 135—143.

Wardlaw's Christian Ethics, Lecture, i.

Chalmer's Bridg. Treatise, last chapter.

It does seem so curious a matter, even in this age of marvels, to find philosophy exalted to the rank of a *Catholicicon*, that we have not yet unlearned the amazement, with which we have contemplated its promotion. We cannot forget what Le Clerc says, (*Hist. Eccles. Sect. 2. an. 101. § 21.*) that philosophy made the Fathers, inventors of *new dogmas*. We might harmonize such a testimony with the recommendation to give philosophy, something "a little lower" than Papal supremacy, if we could believe with Leibnitz, (*Esprit de Leibnitz, tom. ii. p. 48.*) that the Fathers had *rejected* all which was *bad* in the philosophy of the Greeks. But to believe this of them, would be to destroy that famous argument against the Trinity, viz: that it was all stolen from Plato. So we are compelled to think, that philosophy has made the good men

* N. Hist. of Enthus. p. 82.

† Works, iv. 253.

‡ It may be said, that Mr. N. says almost as much of theology in his pref. pp. xxxiv. and xxxv. We think not. We are quite sure of Leighton's meaning; but his words, if somewhat similar, are notwithstanding "ambiguous."

§ Lib. Old Eng. P. Writers, iii. pp. 13, 15.

play pranks in theology, and then to have the same source of witchcraft, recommended as excellent to ourselves. This is somewhat embarrassing to our humble Trinitarian reason, and we freely confess ourselves deficient, in the commodity of "new light." We must be *satisfied* therefore for the present with the "old light" of Erasmus. "*Satis est*," he assures us, "*Satis est* ad consequendam salutem æternam, ea de Deo credere, quæ palam de se prodidit in sacris literis, per selectos ad hoc viros Spiritu suo afflatus; quæque post versans in terris ipse discipulis aperuit; ac demum per Spiritum Sanctum iisdem in hoc selectis discipulis patefacere dignatus est. Haec simplici fide tenere, Christiana philosophia est: hæc puro corde venerari, pura religio est; per hæc tendere ad caelestis vitæ meditationem, pietas est: in his perseverare, victoria est, per hæc vicisse, summa felicitatis est. Ceterum hominem, *ultra hæc, humanis rationibus de rebus divinis vestigare, periculosæ cujusdam atque impiæ audaciæ est.*" Erasmi in Evang. Johannis Paraphrasis Cap. i.

NOTE P. p. 49.

We are promised *much*, if we will fall down and worship "the golden image," which reason, "the queen of opinion," hath set up. It *ought* to be a prodigious temptation, which should induce us to swing loose from ancient moorings, and attempt to discover a "new continent" in theology, when so many millions have been safe, happy, and virtuous, (as virtuous we fearlessly say, as human beings have ever been,) and for hundreds of years, — without doing so. *Why*, should we change? what vast gain, is to accrue? It seems clear as noon-day, that the *onus probandi* here is not ours, and that the pretensions of those who urge a reform, ought to be tested *most rigorously*, as the distinguished legal authority on our title-page has ordained.

Is there any temptation to change, in the vacillating course and indefinite end, if end it could be called, of such a man as Dr. Priestley? He began with Calvinism, then he "became an Arian, next a low Arian, and then a Socinian, and in a little time, a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and *naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses or any other prophet.*" More than this, "he knew not when his creed would be fixed."* To a man on the eve of a change of opinion, the question, *What* am I going to believe, is surely of the most serious moment. Unitarianism in the history of one of its most celebrated advocates, answers him, I cannot tell, — you must follow your own judgment, withersoever it leads you, and even make it your boast, (to the correctness of this part of the representation, our own ears have been witnesses,) your boast, that you know not what you shall believe from day to day. And is a man, when † "it is not doubted, that all the *best* influences of Christian faith, may be felt, and the Christian life acted out, and the consolations and hopes of the Gospel enjoyed," by Trinitarians: is a man readily to abandon *their* faith, and plunge into "the vasty deep," with no better guide than that reason, whose "frailty" has been confessed, by such even as David Hume? ‡ "There are," (said old Bp. San-

* Magee on the Atonement, 1st Am. edition, p. 108.

† Dr. Ware's Lett. to Trinitarians, p. 9.

‡ Phil. Works, iv. 513.

derson two hundred years ago : — What would he say now ?) " There are, God knoweth, afoot in the Christian world, controversies more than a good many, — *decads, centuries, chiliads*, of novel tenets." * Those may adventure among them, who will : we question no man's right. Those may hope from such an adventure, who can : we shall be neither so presumptuous nor so foolish, as to foredoom them. † All we ask, is, that we be not blamed, as wanting excessively in fortitude, in honesty, or in intellect, if for our part we choose to be cautious, and to cling still to a faith, which has been our best comfort on earth, and which we trust will be our rod and our staff, in the valley of the shadow of death. We confess ourselves *suspicious* of reformers, (if our neighbors like the acknowledgment better, *afraid* of them,) for we cannot forget the testimony of an intelligent, vigorous, and philosophical writer upon the study of Law, in his chapter on the connexion between that and the study of religion.

" It is curious enough to observe, that many of these searchers after truth, are men, who have been employed near half a century, in this pretended pursuit ; and yet, have they not settled one single principle : nay, they are more full than ever of doubts and conjectures : and as age and fatigue, have exhausted their strength, and robbed them of their wit, their questions gain in childishness and folly, what they loose in subtlety and invention ; nor is this a single case, I never in my life, met with an old searcher after truth, but I found him, at once, the most wretched and the most contemptible of all earthly beings."

Letters on the Study of the Law p. 305.

" 'Tis certain," said even an Infidel, " that the practice of pulling down, is far pleasanter, and affords more entertainment, than that of building and setting up. Many have succeeded to a miracle, in the first, who have miserably failed in the latter of these attempts. We may find a thousand engineers, who can sap, undermine, and blow up, with admirable dexterity, for one single one, who can build a fort, or lay the plat-form of a citadel."

Shaftsbury's Characteristics. iii. 134.

Quantula, heu ! laus est, vel plurima, posse nocere !

Frigidus hoc serpens, hocque cicuta potest.

* Sermons, p. 490. 8th edition, 1689.

† Seed's Sermons, iii. 108. 3d edition.

ERRATA.

On p. 18, for *alternative*, read *alternatives*. On p. 20, note, for 1. *Cor.*, read 2. *Cor.* On p. 31, for *which to*, read *to which*.

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Christian Trinity :

, THE FATHER; JESUS CHRIST;
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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COURSE

PREACHED IN

CHURCH, CHARLESTOWN,

JANUARY 5, 1860.

GEORGE E. ELLIS.

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DISCOURSE.

Eph. ii. 18: "FOR THROUGH HIM [CHRIST] WE BOTH [JEWS AND GENTILES] HAVE ACCESS BY ONE SPIRIT UNTO THE FATHER."

GOD the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, are brought together in this sentence. I have selected this text for a doctrinal sermon, — a sermon in which I would make every effort in my power, thoughtfully and conscientiously, to distinguish between true and false doctrine; or rather, I should say, between what is true and what is false concerning a great Christian doctrine. That doctrine is known to us under the term "the Trinity;" a symbolic term, which has been so burdened by statements, definitions, and explanations, as to have lost, if it ever had, a distinct and positive meaning. While denying and opposing an element of error in what I understand to be the popular and prevailing doctrine of which that

NOTE. — The reader need hardly be informed that this discourse was greatly condensed in its delivery. It is now enlarged by a more full exhibition of its leading points, and by the Scripture quotations, which were only referred to in a summary way.

term is made to be the symbol, I am infinitely more concerned with the truth, the serious and most momentous and most precious truth, which I believe to underlie the faith connected with the doctrine. I have no objection to the term, "the Trinity:" on the contrary, as will appear, I hope, before I close, I recognize in it an idea, a fact, vital to the Christian system. The Trinity, as applied to the system of the Gospel, and as indicating in and through that Gospel a threefold working of God, expresses to my mind true doctrine; but the Trinity as used to state an imaginary complication in the mode of the divine existence, and as distributing the Godhead into three persons, is, to my mind, the symbol of mere human speculation, vain and erroneous. Whether the term "Trinity," in any sense that we can attach to it, is essential to the expression of any great doctrinal truth conveyed to us by the Gospel, is a question of such large and various bearings, that, if it were discussed at this place in my discourse, it would prejudice or confuse the line of thought and argument which I wish to follow. I am content at present with affirming or accepting the position, that the term "Trinity" — either because the elements of Christian doctrine furnish a warrant for its use as a term, a definition, comprehending some Gospel truth; or because of the adventitious interest which the term has acquired as a symbol of doctrine — is a convenient

and available one in a discussion concerning some great Christian verities.

It would seem as if the course of thought and discussion for fifteen hundred years must have satisfied all candid persons, bearing the Christian name, that there is a vitality in the ideas or the faith of which the doctrine of the Trinity is the more or less happily chosen and adequate expression. Only an amazing self-conceit, or an individual self-assertion amounting to arrogance, could resolve all the interest which now goes with that doctrine into superstition or falsehood. The doctrine may risk the statement of an error, or it may fail to state the truth on which it really fastens a firm hold. It may pass from the range of the intelligible and the essential to the sphere of the unintelligible and the visionary. But that it has hold of a truth, and has always been the means of conveying infinitely more truth essential to the Christian system than it has conveyed of error, is a fact which I could not deny, without calling in question the providential oversight of God over the Church of Christ. Is it not the fair inference of our judgment and confidence, that, taking the broadest possible view of the doctrine of the Trinity, it probably contains some essential truth of transcendent interest and importance, though it may be cast out of just relations, and not happily defined in the creeds of Christians?

During the last fifteen hundred years, a proportion

of at least nine-tenths of the nominal and actual disciples of Christ have accepted and cherished, as a vital and fundamental Christian doctrine, a tenet of belief expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity. I shall by and by attempt some definite statement of the essential meaning of this term, and a definition of the contents of the Trinity; while I shall refer also to the infinite variety of conceptions and statements under which it has been held. At present, I am concerned to do justice to the fact, that a majority, as large as I have numbered it, has held, in some shape or form, a Christian doctrine of the Trinity. And this majority has embraced its full proportionate share of each class of professed and nominal Christians; of the masses; of the simple, the unlearned, and the confiding, who receive what they are taught, without inquiry or discussion; and of the learned, the inquisitive, and the independent thinkers, who have exercised all their utmost individual power of thought and scholarship and devotion in connection with this doctrine. About one-tenth of those numbered in the Christian fold may be taken as a fair estimate of the relative proportion of those who have silently or avowedly dissented from all the popular conceptions and assertions of the doctrine of the Trinity. As these have understood the doctrine through the statements of its advocates, they have rejected it, sometimes with a most earnest opposition, as an unscriptural, irrational, absurd, and

mischievous speculation. And, further, as an expression of individual opinion, I would avow my own mature conviction, that this proportion of nine-tenths and of one-tenth, as defining the number of those who have received and of those who have rejected the doctrine, is also a fair measurement of the relation between what is true and what is false in all the ideas, convictions, scriptural arguments, Christian testimonies, and practical bearings, identified more or less closely with the doctrine of the Trinity.

In my first thought and study upon this subject, I found the doctrine of the Trinity stated in creeds and church formularies in such a set, dogmatic way, so confounding the rules of grammar, syntax, and arithmetic, which I had been learning, that I stood amazed at the introduction of such intricate and apparently unmeaning matter into the system of the Christian religion. I have since learned better; or, rather, I have learned to put a broader and a more discerning and indulgent interpretation upon what Trinitarians *mean* by the doctrine: for I have discovered that what they *mean* is by no fair construction of terms what they assert. Intercourse with minds of various workings — with some between whom and myself, as regards our creeds, it seemed as if there was nothing but painful difference — has satisfied me that we are really most in harmony just on the very points at which we seem most discordant. I found the assertion, that *in the*

Unity of the Godhead there are three Persons, to be either false or unintelligible; but I have learned, that, in that sentence, the word "persons" does not mean what it means on all the other occasions on which we use it in speaking and in writing. My next thought was, if common and very plain words have their meanings wholly changed when used in doctrinal discussions, then a doctrine, which is false when stated under an accepted meaning of a word, may be perfectly true or approximately true when stated under some arbitrary or peculiar meaning of that word. The word "man" may stand for a woman, if we will all agree to use the word "man" for that purpose, in a sense quite different from that in which we use it on all other occasions. So it may be true, that three Divine Persons make but one Divine Being, if these three persons are not three distinct individuals, but are only three aspects or manifestations of one Being. And there is a great deal to be said about the right and the absolute necessity of using words of fixed meaning, in variable and peculiar senses, in some complicated and important discussions about truth, divine and human. Words are not to be our masters, but our servants. They must not chain our thoughts, but should yield to the play and range of our thoughts. Many of the sharpest controversies and strifes in religion, politics, and law, have centred upon different meanings attached to words. In order to

express the exact truth attained or the sound opinion to be received upon some subjects that have long been debated in the old forms of speech, we want many *new* words; for we shall never come to a full understanding or agreement with each other while we use our old terms. So long as we employ these, we shall keep alive the old disputes and misunderstandings associated with them. We need some words which mean about half as much, and others which mean a great deal more than those which have long been used in common speech and defined in dictionaries. When St. Paul spoke of "the foolishness of preaching," he did not mean "foolish preaching" nor "the preaching of fools;" for that ordinance was to him the loftiest of all the exercises of speech for ends of wisdom and piety on the sublimest themes; an ordinance in which angels might exercise their noblest gifts. But the term "foolishness," as he then used it, signified simply the seeming inefficiency and poverty of the mouth-work of preaching to secure the end at which it aimed.

Now, all the statements in words of the doctrine of the Trinity are to be regarded as the efforts, or the results of the efforts, of the human mind to express or to define an opinion or belief as to the way in which God is revealed to us in the Christian religion. I find that the most wise and earnest believers of the doctrine of the Trinity all agree in this very striking

confession, — *that every form of language in which they try to state the doctrine is an inadequate and unsatisfactory expression of the view which they hold, and of the actual doctrine which they understand the Scriptures to reveal.* Language, they say, does not, for this purpose, serve their use. The words which they are compelled to employ mean either too much or too little. Their minds seize hold of conceptions or facts which they are incompetent to announce so as to convey the whole of a right impression, and nothing of a wrong impression. They plead that Scripture itself, when its scattered and fragmentary elements of doctrine are gathered up and set together, is abundantly distinct and emphatic in implying this doctrine, while it does not furnish any single sentence ready shaped for announcing it.

I am by no means intending to convey the impression, that I am at all reconciled to the doctrine of the Trinity, so far as it involves a speculative theory about the internal essence, or mode of existence, of the Godhead, by any elasticity of meaning to be found in the word “persons,” when used to designate a Triad in the Divine Unity. On the contrary, from first to last in this discourse, I wish to emphasize my dissent from every actual and every conceivable form of the doctrine of the Trinity which carries with it a theory or a guess about the interior constitution of the Godhead. I have referred to the play of thought and

fancy with that word "persons," in this connection, only to avail myself of the confession of Trinitarians themselves, that, when they say there is a Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead, they do not mean what they say, but something else. Certainly the interest here grows upon us to learn what they do mean. We will not contend till we are informed just where and how we are at variance.

Again: a further admission is now made by the intelligent and devout believers of this doctrine. They admit that it stands alone among all the great Gospel doctrines, as not allowing of any exposition or illustration by any analogy from nature or providence or the fields of speculation. Attempts used to be made to find such analogies for the doctrine of the Trinity: as, for instance, in the three angles of a triangle; in the three influences of light, color, and heat, incorporated in the sun; and in the threefold dimensions of geometric figure. But such attempted analogical illustrations of the Trinity in Unity are now pronounced fanciful and useless. All efforts to cast the doctrine into a logical formula are pronounced inadequate and unsatisfactory. In asserting the doctrine, its advocates say, "There are three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead;" and they immediately add, "But mind, the word 'persons' does not mean what we mean by it when we use it on all other occasions."

Now, if we have got to find a new meaning for the word "person" in stating the doctrine of the Trinity, it is very evident that the mere word does not involve the truth of the doctrine. The idea which underlies the doctrine is the proper subject of our search and study. Therefore let us utter a word now in the interest of true magnanimity, which, in this case, is the interest of Christian candor or charity. For fifteen hundred years, this high theme has been under debate among Christians. From the first period, between the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian Church, when the elements from which the doctrine of the Trinity was afterwards constructed were the themes of discussion, a passionate strife, always agitating, sometimes even bloody, has been connected with a long-continued controversy about the doctrine. There has hardly been a truce in that transmitted strife. If at one crisis, whether through the agency of a debate or through an imperial edict or a pitched battle, the issue had seemingly been brought to a decision on the Trinitarian or the Unitarian side, the strife was soon again re-opened. The speculative roving of theologians have revolved around the doctrine. Parties have been formed with sole reference to the single point with which the doctrine deals. In vain has it been pronounced a strife of mere words or about barren mysticisms. It has been continually presenting

itself, to individual minds at least, as the freshest of all themes, and the most vital and pregnant, too, in all its relations. Every newly discovered biblical manuscript, every recovered relic of the primitive church, every improved lexicon or grammar of the Greek language, is first of all tested by its bearings upon the doctrine of the Trinity. These facts are to be accounted for in a way that shall respect the most serious exercises of which the human mind and heart are capable, and which shall have regard to the providential oversight of the Gospel.

There are indications now, for the first time, of at least a more profitable and edifying way of treating all differences, if not also of relieving and removing such differences on that doctrine. One great point yielded by Trinitarians is in the admission, that they cannot state the doctrine in any terms of language which will correctly and adequately convey their own meaning. This concession, wisely used, should lead the way to peace or harmony; or, at least, to a better understanding, the want of which has always been a large lack between the parties in the controversy. In the mean while, Antitrinitarians, while they may still insist, as they have always insisted, that the doctrine of the Trinity, so far as it asserts a triplicate organic distribution of persons in the Godhead, is a most unscriptural doctrine, merely speculative and fanciful, may profitably study with new zeal that evident fact

of Gospel revelation which does distribute the whole working force and efficiency of the Gospel truth and power under three divine methods, or agencies, assigned respectively to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That Trinity in Unity is in the Gospel. It is the Gospel. And, from my heart, I do believe that there is wrapped up in that truth the substance of what is and has been really sought and held in the doctrine of the Trinity. There are two quite distinct and very comprehensive grounds on which the prevailing interpretation of the Christian religion insists so strenuously upon some doctrinal truth which is stated, or intended or supposed to be contained, in a doctrine of the Trinity.

1. Something answering to that doctrine is thought to be necessary in order that fair justice be done to what is conceived to be the characteristic peculiarity of the New-Testament Scriptures, in their marked and re-iterated use of three names, attached respectively to three divine agencies, methods, manifestations, or operations, of God, as effecting the whole work of the Gospel. God, the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are the titles of three co-operating agencies, joint forces which combine in that Gospel work. Each of these is recognized in a distinct sphere of action, fulfilling an assigned portion of the whole scheme, and combining harmoniously to complete the purpose in view. Every

class of Scripture readers, from the most scholarly down to those who spell each word of two syllables as they read, have before them this emphatic and distinctive use of the names of the three co-working Gospel agents, or agencies. Some doctrine of a Trinity is thought necessary or natural, at least, for the consistent harmonizing of these scriptural materials. Who will care to dispute this fact? What candid reader does not discern in it the facility of the means by which a doctrine of Trinity in Unity may be developed? And who does not discern the readiness with which an obvious inference from the Scripture representation of the way in which God works in the Gospel, may be turned into a wholly unauthorized but still a venturesome conception about the way in which God himself exists? Still it is plain, that no challenging or denial of the whole popular faith, which goes with or is sheltered under the doctrine of the Trinity, will be of any avail if it fails to meet the exact state of mind with which the mass of Scripture readers assure themselves that “three *some-things*” divide in doing and unite in completing the work of the Gospel. Nor will any doctrine, better in all respects than that of the Trinity, ever find a popular acceptance, except through some clear and adequate development of the contents of the New Testament, as they distribute the work of the Gospel among three agents, or agencies.

2. The second ground on which the prevailing view expressed by the doctrine of the Trinity has established itself is, as it affords a starting-point for the development of a system of Christian doctrines. The doctrine is made to serve the purpose of a great trunk-truth, from which, first the larger branches, and then the smaller outshoots, of Gospel teaching, may radiate. 'But here the constructive ingenuity of men is put to service, and allowed its free exercise. Here, too, come in all the risks, all the uncertainties, all the misleading tendencies, of speculation, fancy, and theorizing, upon themes which transcend the scope of the human faculties. It was through this channel of speculation, and not through the reading of the New Testament, that the common doctrine of the Trinity came into the church. Now, we must be very watchful, in all our dealings with this doctrine of the Trinity, to distinguish broadly between the two very different grounds on which it finds support. The scriptural statements to which it seeks to do justice are the sole authorities for us. The fair construction and interpretation of these is a matter of paramount interest with us. The straits to which men may be driven in their speculations as they attempt to develop a doctrinal system, and the fancies or theories which they may agree to accept, are subjects of quite another sort of interest to us, and wholly destitute of authority for us. In simply dealing with

the scriptural references to the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the chief question is a matter about the right exposition of texts. In the development of a doctrinal system, an additional element intermingles; and human fancies supply either the warp or the woof of the fabric. The careful student of the course of discussion and controversy on this doctrine will note two quite different processes used in arguing for it. One process picks out sentences or half-sentences through all the books of Scripture, and works them into a perfect mosaic of fragments, in order that the composite result may exhibit a Trinity of personalities in the Unity of the Godhead. The other process deals with the doctrine of the Trinity, not so much as finding a statement in the text of the Scriptures, but as inwrought into the scheme and method of redemption by the Gospel. The Christian system, it is affirmed, is built upon the disclosure of a partition of divine instrumentalities between three personalities in the Godhead. In this point of view, the doctrine of the Trinity is made to be the very arcana, the interior secret, of revelation. The relation of the doctrine to the organic development and to the working plan of the Gospel is strongly insisted upon. Some of the most earnest modern defenders of the doctrine plead for it, not so much through the stress of evidence offered for it in the literal statements of Scripture, as for the sake of the inferential uses and

the doctrinal corollaries to be drawn from it. It is adopted as a central truth, that it may serve as a starting-point for the development of a system. Its affiliated doctrines are made to be dependent upon it. It becomes the sap-root of the Christian vine. In this case, the usual method of deducing the doctrinal teaching of the Scriptures is completely inverted. The doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead is pressed upon faith, not because it presents itself obviously and distinctly upon the very surface-teaching of the Scriptures, but because a system of doctrines has been elaborated by the constructive ingenuity of men, which requires this doctrine as the main trunk of its organism. And, when all the vital truths and all the effective methods of the Christian system are thus referred back to this one doctrine, it acquires, of course, an immense amount of adventitious, traditional, and devotional influence. It gets incorporated in the faith, and enshrined in the religious affections, of Christians. It is represented as the central truth of the Gospel, the main pillar of a standing or a falling church. Any single doctrine or tenet, which is thus emphasized and exalted into chief importance, will become the symbol of a very deep interest and affection for the disciples of the system to which it belongs. A trellis, designed to support a growing vine, will decay while it is serving its true office; and then it will come about that the

vine will support the trellis. Many of the views, convictions, and feelings, which Christians have attached to the substance of their Gospel faith, have passed through this transition, — from being the helps or methods of their faith to being burdens upon it.

It is often alleged as a valid reason for receiving the doctrine of the Trinity in its ecclesiastical or speculative form, — that which asserts an actual triplicity of persons in the Godhead, — that the church, the fold of Christ, the vast multitude of believers in every age, with the overwhelming force of a majority, and with the intense assurance of ardent conviction and heart piety, have accepted that form of the doctrine. The dissentients from it, the opponents of it, however estimable, however earnest, have been but a scanty minority; and their arguments and avowals have always been overborne by the throngs of its champions. In the great folios of the church's histories, the names and the pleas of the Antitrinitarians are said to occupy only here and there a page or a paragraph, devoted to the mere ripples of heresy against the rolling tide of orthodoxy. Antitrinitarianism, it is alleged, has always been an unpopular creed, connected with alienation, bitterness, decline of evangelic faith. Its chief advocates have been isolated individuals, eccentric, rationalistic, speculative men, led by prejudice or puffed with conceit. The fellow-

ships for worship, doctrine, or religious action, which it has organized, have always been dissevered from the great Christian vine, — lopped off, deprived of the sap of life which permeates each true branch of the vine; and Antitrinitarians, however kindly regarded or estimated on other grounds, have, in their religious relations, been always warned off by ecclesiastical cordons from intercourse on equal terms with the faithful.

Thus, it is affirmed, stands the case, as it has always stood, between Trinitarians and Antitrinitarians. The vast masses, the mighty companies and communions, alike Roman and Protestant, in the Church of Christ, have been Trinitarians: the feeble, distrusted, and excommunicated minority have been Unitarians. More than this, too, is affirmed. Trinitarianism is said to be the stock-root, the vital centre, the great conduit of truth, for the whole system of Christian doctrine. From that central starting-point all the contents and materials of our faith are developed, and made to live and yield their holy impulses of power and piety. The Trinity is the heart of the Christian doctrine, as the truth about God is the basis for truth about all the things of God, especially about his revelations. Every attempt to lead out the great evangelical tenets into a system of doctrine requires a central truth from which all others may radiate. That central truth must be of such a divine and transcendent

compass as to serve that commanding use. And such a truth, it is triumphantly urged, is found in the doctrine of the Trinity.

I believe I have done justice to all the intended argument in the oft-repeated assertion of the overbearing and triumphant acceptance and prevalence of the Trinitarian doctrine. There is argument in the assertion. It may, however, be fairly challenged, and diminished of its apparent force ; and all candid reasoners must admit that there are just and weighty considerations which reduce its terms so sensibly as really to impair its cogency. I might, for this purpose, urge the familiar pleas, that the truth is not always found with majorities, and that opinions are not to be counted, but weighed. I might call up some of the fancies and superstitions and prejudices which have found an almost universal acceptance with mankind. And then I might proceed to examine this bulk of testimony for Trinitarianism, and ask what proportion of the witnesses for it, in the great promiscuous and heterogeneous companies of men and women composing what is called "the church," have really made any intelligent study, and reached any individual results of thought or belief, on this subject; and what proportion have trusted implicitly to the teachings of others, merely yielding, acquiescing, and professing, as common soldiers march, led by those whom they are willing, or whom they feel bound, to obey.

But I waive all these possible pleas, perfectly reasonable, and carrying with them great force of argument, as all must admit. I waive them simply for the sake of concentrating all the emphasis of an answer to the claim of majority and popularity and prevalence for Trinitarianism on this frank and sufficient reply; viz., that this doctrine of the Trinity has been held under such a wide and inconsistent variety of conceptions and definitions as to destroy all identity in the doctrine itself. That assertion is tenable against all impugnors, and the cogency of it is of immense avail for Antitrinitarianism. The plea of prevalence and supremacy for the church doctrine of the Trinity must be made to rest upon some positive statement of the doctrine in intelligible terms, just as all pleas at law, all claims, all prerogatives, all constitutional enactments, all scientific theories, are held to the utmost possible definiteness in the assertion of them. But the doctrine of the Trinity, through all the ages and in all the communions through which it is traced, and in the advocacy of its champions, who have written in behalf of thousands in their respective fellowships, has been stated and expounded in such an infinite multitude of ways, vague, unintelligible, confounding or sharp, dogmatic or inconsistent, that no common element, no identical idea, appears always and everywhere in these statements.

I might more than fill my pages with a series of quotations from Trinitarian advocates, as they have stated and defined the doctrine; and to each of these definitions or statements would be added the confessions or regrets of the writers, that they had not expressed what is really in their minds, or done justice to the truth which they wished to set forth. They have had to state it as best they were able; and they will urge, that they could not be more explicit, without being less intelligible. The harder they try, the more poorly do they succeed; as Calvin uses the word "persons" in defining the Trinity, and then regrets that he is compelled to use a word which fails to convey his right meaning, and does convey a wrong meaning. And then these same avowers and champions of the church doctrine of the Trinity, baffled or perplexed in their efforts to state it in adequate and intelligible terms, sometimes proceed to give us the reasons why they are so embarrassed and confounded in trying to state a cardinal Christian doctrine in their mother speech, or even in one of the learned but dead tongues of men. Some of them complain of the imperfection and the limitations of language; of the fetters which words impose upon ideas; of the difficulty of transferring to another mind, in the forms of speech, the exact sentiment, or form of a thought, held in their own minds. Others account for their inability to make a satisfactory

statement of the doctrine of the Trinity by reminding us of the ineffable mystery which invests the mode of the Divine Existence, and which revelation penetrates only to allow faith a distant gaze, without allowing the tongue to describe its vision.

Now, these various ways of conceiving and defining the doctrine of the Trinity, followed by the frank and emphatic confession of their inadequacy as statements of it, do certainly qualify and reduce the force of the argument drawn from the acceptance of the doctrine by the church universal. For when we ask, "What is the doctrine which has been accepted and believed by the immense majority of Christians?" we are utterly confounded by the forms and phases and shapes in which the doctrine is set forth. If we try to find in them all some common features and elements, we only get back to the barest and vaguest statement in words or phrases, which was the very statement sought to be made intelligible by fuller definition; the definition, meanwhile, having proved a failure. When any one, now-a-days, assails the doctrine of the Trinity, he has to give solid form to a vague outline in order that he may aim his blows; and, even then, not one in a score of them is allowed to have hit the phantom shape as it expands, contracts, and vanishes.

Neander, the most competent and the most candid and reliable historian of the Christian Church, has brought all his learning, vigor of mind, and acuteness

of thought, to bear upon the course by which doctrines and dogmas were developed gradually, through controversies, discussions, and heresies, from the original staple material of the New Testament, the traditions of the apostolical age, and the contributions of human brains. There are two works of Neander in which a student may pursue the method of this development of opinions: one, the "History of the Christian Church;" the other, "the History of Christian Dogmas." For any but professional or very intelligent and scholarly readers, the works are infinitely perplexing; in parts, actually unintelligible; so abstruse and bewildering are the mazes through which they lead. Neander, however, draws a very lucid distinction between what he calls the practical and the speculative doctrine of the Trinity. By the practical doctrine of the Trinity, he means something wholly unobjectionable to a Unitarian, — something too, which, as I shall attempt soon to show, is the real and essential Trinitarianism of the Gospel scheme. By the speculative doctrine of the Trinity, — which it is doubtful whether the historian himself accepted, as he expressly denies it to be the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, — he means the mere dogma which was the fruit of human brain-work.

I shall attempt, before I close, to indicate the process, as traceable in the pages of Neander's elaborate and thorough works, by which the ingenious meta-

physics of a human philosophy wrought out the fancy, that the one God, in his own interior essence and substance, comprehends three personalities, each of which is also God. At present, keeping in view the positive and not the negative object of my discourse, I would deal at some length with those abundant materials furnished in the New Testament for distinguishing and defining the three divine agencies, or methods, which planned and wrought, and now advance, the work of the Gospel. We must do justice to those verbal statements, to that mode of representation, to that method of instruction, characteristic of the New-Testament writings, which, however far short they fall of asserting a triad of persons in the one God, and, indeed, however irreconcilable they are with that theosophic mystification of human brains, give us three names, which answer to and represent respectively three manifestations or directions of one divine force. We shall best vacate the usurped and always distracting authority claimed by a metaphysical figment — in the most presumptuous venture which it ever dared in parcelling out the essence of the Godhead — by following the lucid method of Scripture as it parts the work of the Gospel on earth, not the Being of the Godhead in heaven, into offices assigned to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

In view of the historical and practical interest for

Christians attaching directly or indirectly to the doctrine of the Trinity, it may be expected of every intelligent and serious person once to read over carefully and systematically the whole New Testament, with sole reference to this doctrine. Take a period in your life, when your mind is most clear and calm and strong, and pursue the question with such light as Providence and opportunity shall afford you. It will be a most rewarding process. All will learn much by it. It is one way, the chiefest way, for reaching individual satisfaction and conviction, where thousands around us are at variance, or are believing and pleading unintelligently to each other and to many of their fellow-men. Consider that, within the small compass of the New Testament, — a book which many persons have read through in a single day, — you have all the material for opinion and authority on this subject. Give over all thought or care for fathers of the church or councils: for, in this case, you may justly follow the spirit of the well-known reason alleged by the Mahometan caliph in burning the great library at Alexandria; viz., that, if the books in it did not agree with the “Koran,” they ought to be burned; and, if they did agree, there was no need of them. If the church fathers and councils followed the New Testament, we have equal access to their original authority: if they vary from it, we have nothing to do with them, nor they with us. From

that date in the history of the Christian Church at which there began to be other writings than the New Testament read by Christians to help them to form opinions about Christian doctrines, there began also the same intricate, confused, and discordant method of asserting, disputing, and controverting, which has steadily increased with the increase of the material for it in books. If Christian teachers, now-a-days, could rid their minds of all that they have learned about the doctrine of the Trinity from all other sources than the New Testament, Christendom might start fair in a new and unprejudiced attempt to develop the contents of the Gospel on the points thought to bear upon this doctrine. And now the mountain heaps of books, and the infinite variety of opinions, and of phases of opinion, about religious doctrines, make it perfectly refreshing to turn back to the original staple material of all this human manufacture of dogmas in the New Testament. The common culture diffused among us, in connection with the acuteness of mind which will generally accompany a serious personal interest in such inquiries, will qualify our lay-people as well as our theologians to pursue the study of any great doctrinal question through the New Testament. Let the search be broad and deep, following on a good position chosen for a starting-point. After we have read the Bible by rote or habit, as we have been taught to do, and

after we have received the sort of religious education attained through listening to preaching, or marking the current opinions around us, the desire is naturally prompted at some time within us to study the substance of the Gospel for ourselves. We try to draw forth, or to arrange systematically, according to their organic relations, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. We must have a starting-point; we must make or find a beginning. The less of our own art or ingenuity that is engaged in the work, the better. A prejudiced start is but a forestalled conclusion. We cannot wholly dispense with our own constructive skill. The simple fact, that we are not satisfied with the unsystematic method of Scripture, but regard its miscellaneous and desultory contents only as materials which we intend to work over, implies that we have a set purpose of assorting or classifying what we call its texts. The great risk in doing this always is, lest we should carry into the Scriptures a system or theory of our own. The risk is inevitable: it admits only of being held in check, and of being subjected to correction, by a frequent review and reconsideration of our system.

The starting-point for a systematic development of the lessons which we draw from the faithful study of the New Testament may be thus defined. The Christian religion brings God into additional, into *new*, relations with men. We know God, independently

of the New Testament, simply as our Creator, and as the sovereign Disposer of our lot. The new Christian ideas which are attached to him are the ideas of redemption, of adoption, and of a communion opened for us with God. These are original and sublime ideas, expressive of august and precious truths. The development of them exhausts the substance of Gospel teaching, and fills the whole range of a complete Christian experience. We are by nature the creatures of God; by revelation through Christ, we are made the children of God, — are adopted by him; and, by an agency called the Spirit, we are made the sensible subjects of God's direct influence within our spirits.

I have intentionally stated this great truth of what is original and additional in the Christian religion, as respects our relation in it to God, in the simplest forms of speech. I may have stated it too coldly, without the glow and fervor and intensity of language which may be proper for the utterance of so precious and so comforting a doctrine. The theme invites us to use the most earnest and ardent outbursts of kindled feeling. But, at present, let us be content with a calm and chastened dealing with it. That method will be the best for impressing the simple but lofty truth to be taken into our minds; which is this, — that the Christian religion brings its disciples into very endearing and very intimate relations with that august Being whom we know, outside of the

Christian religion, only as our Creator. He adopts us in Christ, renews and endears the tie which binds us to him, and opens a tender and constant intercourse between us. These new relations of God to the disciples of Christ are the vital elements of the Gospel. They are the instruments and agencies of its power. The terms "incarnation" or "manifestation," and "fellowship" or "communion" in the Holy Spirit, are expressions which we have to use as we search our way into the interior essence of the Christian religion. We find them as necessary as is the word "Creator," which we apply to God as the Maker of all things in heaven and on earth. What is new in the Christian religion begins with its original disclosures of some more near and fond relations to his children than natural religion ever disclosed or can now verify to human beings. In the development of Christian doctrine on these, its original materials for piety and faith, the terms the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are made the symbols, the emphatic words, constantly recurring, used with remarkable significance, and with a most lucid meaning.

Now, the point of absorbing interest for us is to learn what is the substance and the meaning of this Christian teaching about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Wrapped up in the true Christian doctrine on this high subject lies the whole working force, the original and constant and essential

vitality, of the Gospel. I have said that nine-tenths of all the professed disciples of Christ have accepted some doctrine of the Trinity, as expressing substantially the Christian doctrine on this subject; and I have avowed my belief or admission, that nine-tenths also of what that doctrine of the Trinity means to those who hold it, and of what they intend to believe and assert in it, is the truth. Substantially, then, I might profess to receive a doctrine of the Trinity. Certainly I am more concerned to insist upon the real truth involved in it, than to protest against what I conceive to be the portion of error in it, if, in so doing, I run the risk of seeming to deny its substantial truth. By and by, I shall try to give expression to what I regard as that substantial truth. Now I would intimate what I conceive to be the unscriptural, the heretical, and the erroneous element in it. I object to that doctrine as commonly expounded, when it asserts that there is a triple division in the Godhead; when it divides God into a threefold personality, and distributes the essence of Deity—its organic Unity—into a triad of persons known under three titles. I do not believe, for I do not find revealed, a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. I do believe in a threefold manifestation or operation of God. I can distinguish three divine methods, and can distribute into three specific and appropriate agencies, the divine workings engaged in the Christian religion. It pre-

sents to me the one God as Creator, Father, Origin, Governor, of all things, the sovereign Administrator of the universe; and then as incarnate in Jesus Christ, the express image of God, in a life manifested, set forth, in a living and teaching witness of the Divine; and then, finally, the Gospel discloses to me, under the title of the Holy Ghost, such a kind and compass of special divine agencies, working through such a method, as to make it necessary to have a definite name or title for them. I find no partition of the essence of the Godhead, no organic division of the one personality of the Deity, no triplicity of existence, involved in this distribution of divine forces and agencies in the Gospel. Up to the point in which Trinitarians begin to speculate about the mode in which God actually exists, I can follow them. I think I can discern the exact point at which they leave the practical and revealed doctrine on this subject for the speculative and the dreamy fancies of their own brains; and I think I can understand how and why Trinitarians are induced to transfer conceptions drawn from the way in which God is revealed as distributing his divine agency in the Gospel into three channels, to conceptions about the way in which he himself may exist.

To give expression to all these relations, the new and the old, the natural and the revealed, in which

disciples taught by Jesus Christ are represented as standing towards God, the New-Testament Scriptures state and emphasize and use, with ever-varying richness and abundance of illustration, terms recognizing three methods or directions of divine agency and influence. These three methods answer to, or are represented respectively by, the names of God, the Father; Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit. The reiteration and the emphatic use of these terms, singly or in conjunction, give a very peculiar character to the New-Testament Scriptures, drawing a very marked distinction between them and the Old-Testament Scriptures. The four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, are all characterized by this emphatic distribution of the efficient forces of Christianity among divine agencies, of which the three names are the symbols. But, as it is in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles that we have the most specific and definite details of the methods by which the Christian religion was planted in different communities, it would be natural for us to expect, as indeed we find, that this distribution of divine forces is more directly presented to our notice in them than it is in the Gospels. These phenomena of the New-Testament Scriptures are worthy of very careful study on their own account. They must be thoroughly apprehended in all their textual relations by any one who would do justice to the particular mode, the pre-

cise form, in which Christian truth is there presented to us. It is my own sincere conviction — formed, I humbly trust, after a serious, a faithful, and a patient examination of all the grounds and materials for an intelligent opinion — that this method in which Christian truth is presented to us in the New Testament, furnishes the elements which are erroneously wrought together and most strangely perverted into a theological fiction, in the common doctrine of the Trinity. We are to do justice to that method of Christian teaching. We are to understand why it is that the agencies of faith and power, by which the Gospel of Christ was planted in the world, are distributed respectively under three names, or titles. The right view on this subject may disclose to us how the wrong view originated; where the transition-point from truth to error is to be discerned; and how the error will be made to yield to a better apprehension of the truth, clearly apprehended and loyally maintained.

I will therefore venture to indicate, for others to try if they see fit, the process which I have pursued at length in order to attain an intelligent and unbiased opinion derived from the first and the only authoritative sources on this whole subject. Sit down in the most quiet place of your own retired hours, furnished with the New Testament, with pen and ink, and with three large sheets and one half-sheet of fair paper. Open the book with the Acts of the Apostles, and

read carefully on, with the most concentrated gaze of your eye and your mind, till you have closed with the Revelation of St. John. As you read, copy on the half-sheet of paper — that space will suffice for them — all the passages which bring together in one grammatical sentence, and which thus refer in connection to God, the Father ; Jesus Christ ; and the Holy Spirit. On each of the three sheets transcribe such passages as make mention singly of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit ; passages appealing to them respectively, referring to them for faith, for guidance, for counsel, for strength ; passages ascribing to them work, offices, glory, gratitude, trust ; passages which trace to them the planning, the purposing, the administering, or the accomplishing, any thing, any enterprise, or any service, in the interest of truth, of humanity, of revelation, of the Church and Gospel of Christ.

I will venture still to intimate to you some of the results to be attained by that method, such as I myself reached, to be accepted or rejected by you as you shall verify or test them by your own independent search. I found not a single syllable, hint, or assertion, which, from the first to the last, indicated an occult doctrine about the interior essence of the Godhead as distributing its Unity into a Triad of persons, each one of which has all the attributes of an underrived and self-possessed Deity, while the three are

still mysteriously one, and the one is mysteriously three. Not a single sentence of the records suggests to me such an idea, nor do I know of a single sentence that can be made consistent with it; while the record teaches me much else, very definitely, very emphatically, that gives me a clear doctrine quite wide away from such a speculation. The single sentences which make mention in grammatical connection of God, the Father; Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, — would seem to be the ones in which we should find at least the nearest approximation to a statement of that doctrine of tripersonality in the Godhead; or, at any rate, the elements of the doctrine should lie in them most facile to such a use, to such a constructive inference from them. But they are, in fact, the least available, the most intractable, for such a use. Every conception, imagination, and idea of that occult doctrine, concerning the mode in which God exists, has to be forced into those passages, and cannot be deduced from them.

After you have copied out all the texts, the sentences, the lines, or the phrases, which make emphatic mention respectively of God, the Father; of Jesus Christ; and of the Holy Spirit, — you will have before you all the materials through which Christendom has to draw forth its doctrine about the offices and the relations expressed by those three names. You will find that all the planning, helping, and accomplishing

involved in the whole Gospel work is distributed to the agencies of which those names are the titles. One or another of those titles comes into use in the apostolic teaching, and in the intercourse of Christian disciples, to designate the power invoked, the help relied upon, the method through which hope, strength, or success, reaches the subjects of their joint oversight, instruction, or guidance. There are results of inexpressible interest, convictions of a very precious sort, knowledge and faith applicable to many ends of piety, and all independent of and additional to the merely doctrinal purpose in view, to be reached by this process, which is, of itself, so directly helpful to true doctrine.

Some very remarkable and instructive elements, which will enter into the results reached by the process that has been indicated, may here be mentioned. The number of the texts on each of the three sheets of paper that are to present respectively the passages in which God, the Father; Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, — or what is synonymous with each of those titles, — are named, referred to, relied upon, and credited, for the offices of planning, helping, and accomplishing, ascribed to each of them, will seem, at first view, about equal. But, if pains be taken to count the passages, it will be found that the distinction of the larger number of references, as well as the other distinctions of eminence and prerogative

and supreme authority yet to be mentioned, goes with God, the Father.

A more striking and significant element in the result that will be reached is now to be stated with the emphasis that befits it. In order to present it in its full force, I must be pardoned for introducing it with an illustration by an analogy, which, though it must be admitted to jar with the solemnity of our theme, may yet be employed without irreverence. We are familiar in the concerns of human life, in matters of the most serious interest as well as in those of a merely pecuniary and business character, with arrangements which engage three joint agents, partners, or incorporated parties, in some common object. They may differ in age, in knowledge, in responsibility, in the amounts which they risk, and in the distribution of their profits. They may divide among them the trusts and functions which enter into their partnership. They may be mutually ignorant of each other's methods or details of employment. The whole administrative or executive authority may be vested in one of them, and the other two may be merely subordinates to him. There may be two persons, and the property of a third, without his own personal agency engaged in the partnership. In all such joint interests, undertakings, and relations, — and they admit of an infinite variety in their particulars, — there may be a parting-out, a distribution, of

functions covering all the concerns that enter into the common object ; and, at every stage and in every element of the scheme which engages them, the work will be most effectively done when each contributes his full share. Now, so far as this not wholly appropriate illustration will furnish one point for an analogy, we may avail ourselves of it in the case before us. God, the Father ; Jesus Christ ; and the Holy Spirit, — are represented in the New Testament as engaged in the work of the Gospel, as contributing each some specific element to that whole work, as uniting in its common object. A selection and arrangement of all the Scripture references to each of those respective titles, will exhibit with an amazing clearness before our eyes and minds a most exact and appropriate distribution of functions and services in that common work among the joint agents in it. Till any one has actually made this disposition of Scripture passages, he will have no idea whatever of the wonderful consistency that characterizes, in this respect, the writings coming to us from the different pens which contributed to the New Testament. Cursory readers may take up the impression, that there is a sort of indiscriminate assignment of the works and offices of the Gospel indifferently to God and Christ and the Spirit ; but this is very far from being the truth of the case. There is not the slightest confusion indicated in the use of the three

names, or in the offices, functions, and services assigned respectively to what is signified by them. In no single instance is there a trespass by one of them into the range filled and served by appropriation by the other. In no joint partnership in any human enterprise, in no distribution of the functions of government into legislative, judicial, and executive, or into primary and representative authorities, was there ever recognized a more exact, systematic, and consistent partition of rights, duties, and offices, than is observed throughout the New Testament in assigning all the work of the Gospel by portions, respectively, to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit. To each of them belongs a specific and distinct function, range, method, and efficiency. God, the Father, plans, administers, and directs the work; and every element and stage of it which concerns that supereminent function is uniformly assigned to him. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are the subordinates of God: their offices and authority and efficiency are derived from him. They come into the work, at a stage subsequent to its original plan, as agents and instruments in the working of it; and, in all the exalted service which they render, they refer us back to the prime Source of their own functions, and accept the work assigned to them as subordinate service. The merely mechanical labor of my pen, following the search through the New Testament,

and aided by the corresponding office of the printing-types, would readily serve to place before the reader an exhaustive display of all the Scripture passages to be parted out by the method before us. That whole exhaustive process is necessary to the complete exhibition of the contents of the New Testament as they bear upon this point. But as, for reasons already given, I would have every earnest inquirer, who is perplexed by the way in which he finds this doctrinal discussion pursued by others, perform the rewarding task of a thorough distribution of texts for himself, I will attempt a distribution of the passages found only in four consecutive documents of the New Testament; viz., the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans, and the two Epistles to the Corinthians. Of course, we must make allowance for the risk which we incur of breaking the sense and impairing the full meaning of a passage of which we quote but a fragment. Occasionally, too, we shall be embarrassed, though, perhaps, we shall be more frequently enlightened as to the main object we have in view, by the combination, in some sentences, of two of the scriptural elements which we wish to isolate. Still, the partition of offices and functions respectively to God, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, is so luminous and so consistent in the method of it through the whole record, that the substantial result of our labor will hardly fail to satisfy us.

To "God, the Father," — "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," — his Father and our Father, his God and our God, from the beginning to the end of the New-Testament record, with all emphasis, reiteration, and variety of phrase, and with all the force and distinctness of which the simplest forms of language will admit, is referred the sole and entire supremacy in the whole Gospel work. His was the original scheme, his the chosen time and means, his the efficiency, his the wisdom and the power and the love, manifested in the Gospel. In reference to the world which God designed to make and to govern, Christ is said to have "had glory with the Father before the world was." Christ is said also to have been "slain from the foundation of the world." So is it said of the disciples of Christ, that God "had chosen them in him before the foundation of the world." And Christ said, in prayer to God for these disciples, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." So far back into undated ages is the Gospel scheme, with its agencies of love, represented as formed in the one Divine Mind. Every stage, in its preparatory processes and in its earthly development, is committed to the sole purpose and oversight of God. And to him, as it advances, the angels of heaven ascribe glory over the nativity of Christ; and to him Christ himself, as well and as dependently as do the disciples of Christ, addresses all his prayers.

It was God who "so loved the world as to send into it his Son." — "It is life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." — "All things" in the Gospel "are of God, who is over all, and in all, and through all."

Turn now to those Scriptures through which our gatherings are to be made, and mark the office of God the Father in the Gospel work. Let us bind into one close-set paragraph of sentences, Scripture statements, which may be fragmentary indeed, as so selected, but which shall be honestly chosen for the leading thought and sentiment, and for the one supreme Name which is in them. Trusting to the memory of readers and to the facility of reference, we may omit the notes of chapter and verse.

[ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.] While Jesus was with his disciples, after his resurrection, he spoke to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At Jerusalem, they were to "wait for the promise of the Father," which they had heard from Christ. Christ told them it was not for them "to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." "God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." "The promise is unto as many as the Lord our God shall call." "God raised from the dead" him whom the Jews had crucified. God shall again "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached." "The things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his prophets" included the promise, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you." "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you."

The disciples "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God." Herod, Pilate, and the people of Israel, had combined "to do what God's hand and God's counsel had determined before to be done." "God hath given the Holy Ghost to them that obey him." The Gospel is "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel by Jesus Christ." "The Gentiles also received the word of God." While Peter was in "prison, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." When the apostles come together for counsel or fellowship, "they rehearse all that God had done with them," "declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them," and that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." The Gentiles, embracing the Gospel, "turned to God." Paul "declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." In their prison, "at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God." Paul declared to the Athenians the unknown God, whom they ignorantly worshipped, as "the God that made the world, and all things therein;" and as having "appointed a day for the judgment of the world" by Jesus Christ, whom he had "raised from the dead." Paul promises disciples at Ephesus to return to them again, "if God will;" and, fulfilling his promise, "he persuaded them of the things concerning the kingdom of God," and he declared unto them "all the counsel of God." "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." The doctrine which Paul preached was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" and, in parting from those to whom he had preached, he said, "I commend you to God." It was after Paul had espoused the "heresy" of the Gospel that he still continued to "worship the God of his fathers," to hold fast to his "hope toward God," and to

keep "a conscience void of offence toward God." He was judged for his "hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers;" and, "having obtained help of God," he continued to testify. At Rome, though a prisoner, "he expounded and testified the kingdom of God" "to the Gentiles, to whom the salvation of God was sent."—

[EPISTLE TO ROMANS.] "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God (which he had promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all." "God is my witness, whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son." "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation." "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed." "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "The righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ." "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth." "We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "The grace of God by one man, Jesus Christ." "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." "Reckon yourselves to be alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Yield yourselves unto God." "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Ye are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "He spared

not his own Son." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "It is God that justifieth." "The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead." "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. To Him be glory for ever." "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service." "There is no power but of God." "Every tongue shall confess to God; every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "He that serveth Christ is acceptable to God." "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." "That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." "Ministering the Gospel of God." "I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God." "I beseech you, that ye strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God." "Now the God of peace be with you all." "To God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever." — [1 CORINTHIANS.] "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, unto the Church of God at Corinth: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always, on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellow-

ship of his Son." "The preaching of the cross is the power of God." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world and the weak things of the world," &c. I declared "unto you the testimony of God, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." "The things which God hath prepared for them that love him, God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit." "The things that are freely given to us of God." "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." "We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building." "According to the grace of God which is given unto me," &c. "Ye are the temple of God." "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "We are ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." "God hath called us to peace." "There is none other God but one." "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." "Do all to the glory of God." "The head of Christ is God." "Despise ye the Church of God?" "God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body." "God hath set some in the church." "He will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." "Let him speak to himself and to God; for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." "I persecuted the Church of God." "We have testified of God, that he raised up Christ." "The end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." "When he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under him. Then shall the Son also himself be

subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." — [2 CORINTHIANS.] "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth: Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," &c. "That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead," &c. "By the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." "For all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now, he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ; for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ." "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." "Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." "That the abundant grace might redound to the glory of God." "We know that we have a building of God in the heavens." "Now, He that hath wrought for us the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." "We are made manifest unto God."

"Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." "Approving ourselves as the ministers of God, by the word of truth, by the power of God." "Ye are the temple of the living God." "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us." "That our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you." "The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia." "Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." "For God loveth a cheerful giver; and God is able to make all grace abound toward you." "Which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." "They glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, for the exceeding grace of God in you." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God; casting down every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." "The measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us." "I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely." "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." "We speak before God in Christ." "Christ yet liveth by the power of God." "I pray to God that ye do no evil." "The God of love and peace shall be with you."

Such is the array of sentences furnished by four of the separate contents of the New Testament, recognizing and defining the agency of God, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father," in the Gospel. He is supreme in the work; he planned it; he provided all the instrumentalities of it; he guided, re-enforced, and sustained the work in all stages of its progress. Not a single sentence which we have read would lead us to conceive of any confusion of the Unity of the Divine personality; not an intimation, as given to the Jewish converts, who had been believers in the strict Unity of God, that henceforward, as Christians, they must conceive of him as a Triad of Persons, or subsistencies. To God alone do the apostles look as to the source and inspiration of the whole Gospel scheme. Very much is made, by the champions of Trinitarianism, of a sentence occurring in a letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, about the meetings and the worship of the Christians, when the sect was new and strange and persecuted. That functionary had heard, that, in their assemblies, they "sung hymns to Christ as to a God." This is just such a report as we should have expected would have been circulated and caught up about the early Christians by Pagans. If a sentence had been found in the New Testament, telling us, that, when the apostles were in prison, the disciples had prayed to Christ in their

behalf, the sentence would certainly have confused us. We do read of the prayers of the church on such an occasion ; but they were addressed to God.

The sole and supreme prerogatives assigned to God, in all the sentences we have been reading, must, of course, preclude the assignment of them to any other than God in the same records, if their contents are self-consistent. It remains, therefore, for us to test whether the contents of those records are self-consistent ; that is, whether the offices assigned to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit, so far as a specific agency is attributed to each of them, are always distinctly described as subordinate to the agency of the Almighty Father. If Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are but two other titles of the same God of whom we have been reading, that also will appear from the records. If specific and dependent and delegated agencies are represented as committed to them by God, and if they are found to have fulfilled them, the records will be luminous in their consistency.

We turn now to those sentences from the Scripture documents before us, from which we are to deduce the office and work assigned emphatically to Jesus Christ in what is called "the Gospel scheme." Many of the sentences which we have been reading for what they tell us of God, have contained also a reference to the name and work of Christ. Let us

clearly understand the object and aim which we have in view. We are not seeking to gather the materials for a theory about the "nature of Christ." It is admitted to be one of the most difficult and baffling of all the tasks essayed by theologians, in their attempts to construct a system of Christian divinity, to work together, digest, and harmonize every sentence, phrase, and scrap of language used concerning Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and from them to elaborate a dogma, a consistent and intelligible theory, about his "nature." Many, who have spent precious hours and tedious though ungrudged toils on that work, have rested in the two conclusions,—that it was no design of the New-Testament writers to give us the full materials of a dogma on that point, and that no practical or devotional end of the Gospel is committed to that hard point of theology, while we are concerned, not with the "nature" of Christ, but with his offices. We have seen that Christ is spoken of as having had glory with the Father before the world was (John xvii. 5). If that sentence stood alone, the natural inference from it would be, that Christ existed literally and in fellowship with God before the creation of the world. But we find that the most essential and the most helpful rule, in the interpretation of the oracular sentences of Scripture, is to make one sentence throw light on another. So we find that Christ is also said to have been slain before the

foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8); and, as this latter assertion can be verified only as it recognizes a prospective reference to the death of Christ in the counsels of God, we might naturally ask, why we should not interpret the reference to Christ's existence and glory before his earthly manifestation by the same anticipatory designs of the Almighty. And this question would find ground for its affirmative answer in the fact, that the disciples of Christ are likewise said to have been chosen and beloved of God before the world was made" (Eph. i. 4); while Christ also says that he had given them the glory which God had given him (John xvii. 22). Again: there are many nice distinctions and many varied features in the significations of important words, epithets, and titles, transfigured and impregnated by natural and by pious uses, and committed to technical purposes, through which one would have to search with pains, and not always clearly, in seeking to construct from them a dogmatic opinion. Thus any diligent Bible reader will discover, what the critical scholar can only more learnedly illustrate, that the epithet "first-born," applied to Christ, is a term which by no means designates always a literal precedence or priority in the order of time, but is used also to signify pre-eminence and superiority of quality.

The course of inquiry which I have suggested, and have thus far followed, will not, however, require any

such deep and elaborate investigations. The instruction for which we are seeking lies plainly upon the surface of Scripture. We seek to gather from its obvious and its lucid statements what is the place or agency assigned to Jesus Christ in the partition of the efficient work of planting the Gospel in the world. That Gospel is indifferently spoken of as the Gospel of God and the Gospel of Christ. So, also, the church is indifferently entitled the "Church of God" and the "Church of Christ." Sometimes "the name of Christ" stands for his Gospel, or for his doctrine, or for his truth, or for that Divine Agency which Christ represents. If we have found the most explicit and re-iterated statements of the sole supremacy and entire prerogative of Him who is called God, or the Father, in the plan and purpose of the Gospel; so, in strict conformity with this view, we find that a secondary, a derived, a subordinate, and dependent agency is uniformly assigned to Jesus Christ. We do not need to play any variations of meaning upon the use of the word "person," when we apply it to Christ, as theologians are wont to do when they merge three "persons" in the one God. The distinctness of Christ's personality, of his individuality, in that part of the work of the Gospel which is done on the earth, would hardly allow us to suppose that he parted with any element of that personality in his mode of existence and service in

heaven. Christ is represented to us as the Image, the Manifestation, the Witness of God, — an embodiment of the mind and will of God. The most adequate idea answering to and taking in all that is written of him and attributed to him would conceive of him as having been, as having lived, acted, spoken, and done, just what God himself would have been, just as He would have lived, acted, spoken, and done, could the Deity himself become a sojourner on earth, a visible companion to men ; saving only these two conditions, — that the Deity would never have referred his power and doctrine to one above Him, nor have offered prayer. Saving only these two conditions, Christ spoke and did as we conceive God himself would speak and do if he visibly walked the earth with men. But those two conditions are of exceeding significance, as limitations of the nature of Christ. Christ asserted and accepted for himself an office and a service assigned to him by God. He pointed from himself upwards. He bowed himself, he knelt, he struggled, in prayer. He claimed a high and transcendent office ; but it was an office. He came upon a service which man could not perform ; but it was a service. He exercised a mighty power ; but it was given to him. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled ; but the Father sanctified him, and sent him into the world. He had power to lay down his life, and to take it again ; but that commandment he

had received of his Father. He is to reign until all things are put under him ; though "it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under him." Exalted titles, transcendent honors, and superhuman qualities, are ascribed to Jesus Christ, because "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." But there is no occasion for stumbling, no inevitable risk of losing sight of the distinction between him and God ; for though he did say, "I and my Father are one," he signified what he meant by it, by praying that his disciples and himself and God might all be *one* in the same sense. And in that "he was faithful as a Son," he referred all that he was and said and did to the gift of the Father in him. To him, then, is assigned the office of manifesting God in a life conformed to some conditions of humanity, for the purpose of fulfilling the objects of his mission. "He is the faithful and true witness." God speaks and acts through him. He exhibits to men the qualities of a divine Sonship, and is made the medium and channel of that Divine Grace which re-creates humanity, restores to it the image of God, and adopts men as children, — sons of the Infinite Father. That oracular sentences and transcendent honors should be connected with the offices and the name of one who holds this relation to God and men, is no matter of surprise to us. We proceed to gather from the Scriptures the terms of language and of doctrine concerning him.

[ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.] "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you," &c. "God had sworn that he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." "This Jesus hath God raised up. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." "God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ." "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just; and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead." "And his (Christ's) name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong." "He (God) shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken," &c. The apostles "taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead,—by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "They commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." "The rulers were gathered against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed," &c. "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right

hand to be a Prince and a Saviour," &c. "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." "Stephen said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." "And they stoned Stephen, calling out, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And Christ (appearing to Paul) said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," &c. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God; proving that this is very Christ." "Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; for God was with him." "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly to us, and commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." "Of David's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." "We believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." "Barnabas and Paul hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Paul preached, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained." "Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah." "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." "The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." "Paul testified repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." "The ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the

grace of God." "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus."
 "Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in
 Christ." "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest
 me to be a Christian." At Rome, Paul "preached the king-
 dom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord
 Jesus." — [EPISTLE to ROMANS.] "Paul, a servant of Jesus
 Christ in the Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ
 our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according
 to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with
 power: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God: Grace be to
 you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus
 Christ." "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it
 is the power of God." "The day when God shall judge the
 secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel."
 "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath
 set forth to be a propitiation," &c. "We have peace with
 God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have
 access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice
 in the hope of the glory of God." "In due time, Christ died
 for the ungodly." "We were reconciled to God by the
 death of his Son." "We joy in God, through our Lord
 Jesus Christ." "The grace of God, and the gift by grace,
 by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." "So
 many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were bap-
 tized into his death." "Reckon yourselves alive unto God,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The gift of God is
 eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "There is,
 therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ
 Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life [the spiritual life] in
 Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and
 death." "We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."
 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? From the
 love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Christ
 is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth." * "We, being many, are one body in Christ." "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." "To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living." "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." "For even Christ pleased not himself." "The grace is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles." "I have, therefore, whereof I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God." "Greet my helpers in Jesus Christ." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." "Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, — to God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever." — [1st EPISTLE TO CORINTHIANS.] "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, to all that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I, of Apollos; and I, of Cephas; and I, of Christ. Is Christ divided?" "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, lest the cross of Christ

* I omit, in the connection, the passage in Rom. ix. 5, because I accord with the judgment of the best biblical critics, unlike Trinitarian and Unitarian, that, properly rendered, it concludes with an ascription to God, thus, — "God, who is over all, be blessed for ever!"

should be made of none effect." "We preach Christ crucified, — Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." "I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "We have the mind of Christ." "Babes in Christ." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." "We are fools for Christ's sake, and ye are wise in Christ." "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." "For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us." "Your bodies are the members of Christ." "He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." "To us there is but one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ." "The weak brother for whom Christ died." "When ye sin against the brethren, ye sin against Christ." "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" "I make the Gospel of Christ without charge." "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." "Neither let us tempt Christ." The cup is "the communion of the blood, the bread the communion of the body, of Christ." "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God." "I have received of the Lord Jesus that which I also delivered unto you." "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come." "Ye are the body of Christ." "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "He was buried, and rose again the third day: he was seen of Cephas," &c. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain," &c. "We have testified of God that he raised up Christ." "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are

Christ's at his coming." "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." "The second man is the Lord from heaven." "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus." — [2d EPISTLE to CORINTHIANS.]

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth." "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." "We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you by us." "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ." "In the sight of God speak we in Christ." "Ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us." "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." "The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves, your servants, for Jesus' sake." "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." "Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." "The love of Christ constraineth us." "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we him no more." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "We are ambassadors for Christ." "We pray you in Christ's

stead." "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." "Our brethren are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ." "I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." "Bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ." "If any man trust that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." "The simplicity that is in Christ." "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." "We speak before God in Christ." "Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." "Christ yet liveth by the power of God." "Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

Such is the use of the name of Jesus Christ, as designating one of the forces, or agencies, by which the church was planted on the earth. Such is the office, such the range of service, filled by him who bears that name; and such was the inspiration of faith and confidence which the name afforded to those who wrought by it. Certainly one would think that Jesus Christ had a full, a distinct, and an intelligible personality.

The phrase the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit, is often, in its largest, fullest sweep of meaning, a synonyme, another title, for God. There are passages in the Bible, in which, where the word "God" is now used, we might substitute the expression "the Holy Spirit;" and there are other passages, in which, where the phrase "the Holy Spirit" is used, we might substitute the word "God," and yet leave

the sense of the passages wholly unchanged, neither strengthened nor diminished in force, in either case. But we could not make this substitution in all the passages in which these terms are now used; and if any one were to try, for instance, to substitute the word "God" for the phrase "the Holy Spirit," in at least a score of important and emphatic sentences in the New Testament, he would introduce confusion in the sense. In making the experiment, he would be as likely as in any other more direct way to discover the peculiar and most significant purpose which the phrase "the Holy Spirit" is made to serve in the New Testament. He would discover that the phrase is far from being always simply a synonyme for the word "God." The phrase is, in fact, used to express a distinct method of divine agencies and influences appropriated for the specific work of the Gospel, — a method of divine agencies and influences so easily distinguishable from all other divine agencies, so prominently announced in the Gospel, and so vital to the Gospel system, as to make it absolutely necessary that there should be a distinct and emphatic name, title, form of speech, for designating it. We meet with the term "Holy Spirit" thrice in the Jewish Scriptures, — the Old Testament;* but how rare, how much less emphatic, familiar, and striking, is its use there, from what it is in the New Testament! The

* Ps. li. 11; Isa. lxiii. 10, 11.

fact is, that the Gospel appropriates the phrase as if the Gospel had an exclusive and secured right to it; as if the Gospel only knew how to use it; as if the Gospel had discovered and proved the real purpose and efficiency of the Holy Ghost, and had demonstrated all its functions and power. The writings of St. Paul are strewn all over with the phrase; and he uses it as designating a mighty instrumentality, to the knowledge of which he had come after leaving the school of Gamaliel for the school of Christ. Indeed, the phrase is put to such service in the New Testament as to warrant the conclusion, that its significance and use, whatever they shall prove to be, are original with the Gospel.

This peculiar Christian use of the phrase first presents itself to our notice, in all its original and emphatic force, in the Gospel of St. John. The frequent and striking references to the Holy Spirit, near the close of that Gospel, are in the words of Christ himself. There is an emphasis, or distinctness, in these references, which has always engaged the attention alike of biblical critics and of common readers; and such critics and readers alike have gathered from them a full persuasion, that Christ either referred in those passages to some divine agency that had not previously had a distinct recognition in the faith of his hearers, or that he assigned a wholly new method and intensity of operation and energy to a

spiritual force of which before they had had only a dim conception. Either a new divine agent or agency, or else a new manifestation and disclosure and operation of a recognized spiritual force, present themselves as the alternative views to be taken of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the words of Jesus. In the one or the other of these views, the multitude of Christian readers have been persuaded that they must find an article of Christian faith.

An incidental remark, in passing, is called forth to meet a bold suggestion that has a serious bearing here. It has been asserted, in the interest of a sceptical criticism, that the most peculiar and striking references to the offices and agency of the Holy Spirit are found only in the Gospel of John, — not in the other New-Testament writings ; and that this significant fact, taken in connection with other marked characteristics of the fourth Gospel, may favor the guess, that St. John indulged his own mystic reveries, his own spiritual dreamings, in his record of Christ's ministry ; and has mingled some devout theosophic inventions of his own fancy with the transcript from his memory of the teachings of his Master. To this sceptical suggestion there is a full and triumphant refutation within reach of all careful readers. It is true, that the finer spiritual apprehension of St. John was the source of a truer sympathy between him and his Master, and gave to him the hearing ear, the

interpreting mind, and the responsive soul, for some lessons of his Master not caught or recorded by the other evangelists. It is true, also, that Christ's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is more pointedly, richly, and with fuller emphasis, set forth by him than by the other New-Testament writers. St. John alone, of all those writers, quotes the Saviour as applying to the Holy Spirit the verbal form of speech which is translated by the words "the Comforter." The same original term which is thus translated in the Gospel, is, in the First Epistle of John (ch. ii. ver. 1), rendered, by the translators of our version, "an Advocate ;" and there the term is applied to Jesus Christ: "If any man sin, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But it is not true, that we find only in St. John's Gospel the peculiar and emphatic doctrine of Christ concerning the Holy Spirit, or indeed any reference to it that is exclusively, in the substance and tone of it, a characteristic of the beloved disciple. On the contrary, this remarkable fact will disclose itself to every careful reader, that, in all the other New-Testament writings, there are references to the offices and agency of the Holy Spirit, which would be obscure, if not really unintelligible, to us, except through the light and the interpretation thrown upon them by the very statements made by Jesus Christ himself, as reported by St. John. The actual work and power referred in the most incidental

way, through the Acts and the Epistles, to the Holy Spirit, are in practical test and fulfilment of the theory or the promise of such an agency or agent as recorded by St. John. That some doctrine of the Holy Spirit was one of the most novel and effective agencies employed in planting the new faith, is evident from the most cursory glance at its early history in the Acts and Epistles. It would not be possible for us to comprehend or to connect an intelligible idea with such references, if our minds had not been prepared for them by the words of Christ reported by St. John. The gift and the effects of the Spirit, as manifested on the day of Pentecost, answer exactly to, and will answer to nothing short of, the previous promise of precisely such a manifestation as related by the beloved disciple. But it is not John alone of the four evangelists who caught and recorded the utterances of the Saviour about the new agency, or the new manifestation, called the Holy Ghost. St. Matthew gives place to the words of Jesus concerning the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost (xii. 32). St. Mark, as does also St. Luke, records the promise, fulfilled in the Acts and the Epistles, that the Holy Spirit should prompt the utterance and the pleas of persecuted disciples, when brought before the tribunals of their enemies (Mark xiii. 2; Luke xii. 12). And Luke also reports his Master as speaking distinctly of the Holy Spirit as a grace, or

gift, which might be imparted or bestowed: "Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (xi. 13).

The full and emphatic references to the Holy Spirit, as a promised power for the Gospel, — recorded by St. John, — explain all that we find in the Acts and the Epistles as demonstrations, actual workings, of the New Power. The significant sentences at the close of his Gospel — mystical as they may be when read there — seem, as we read the following pages of the New Testament, to give us a key, every ward of which fits into the lock opening to the treasures of the divine word.

Gathering up, then, the teaching of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit, as recorded by St. John, we find that the Saviour spoke his fullest and most tender words of this sort when the hour was approaching for him to leave his disciples. He promises the Holy Spirit as a substitute for his own visible presence, and as a consolation for his absence. He will pray the Father for the Holy Spirit, as for another Comforter, to abide with them for ever (xiv. 16, 17).* It

* There is some confusion caused to English readers of the New Testament by an interchangeable use of the pronouns *he* and *it*, applied to the Holy Spirit; leaving the matter in doubt as to whether a *person* or a *thing* is thus signified. The confusion arises from the fact, that the original Greek word, — translated into English, *Comforter*, — being of the masculine gender, requires the corresponding pronoun and relative *he* and *who*; while the original word, translated *Spirit*, being of the neuter gender, requires the pronoun and relative *it* and *which*. Our translators, however, have broken the rule of grammar, and have wholly omitted the article before the word *truth*. The true rendering of the text is, "And I will pray the Father, and *he*

is the Spirit of the Truth, — not discerned, not known, by the world, but known by, dwelling with, and abiding in, the Christian disciple. This Comforter — the Holy Spirit — the Father would send, in the name of Christ, to teach the disciples all things, and to bring to their remembrance whatever Christ had said to them. Again: with some variation of language, but with essentially the same meaning, we have these words: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, — the Spirit of the Truth which proceedeth from the Father, — he shall testify of me” (xv. 26). Yet again we read: “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send him unto you. And, when he comes, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. When he — the Spirit of the Truth — comes, he will guide you to the whole truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will announce to you things that are to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall tell it unto you” (xvi. 7-15). And finally, as Jesus visibly departs from his dis-

will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, — the Spirit of the Truth, which the world cannot receive, because it doth not discern it nor know it: but ye know it; for it dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” As Jesus speaks of *another* Comforter beside himself, he must himself have answered to what is meant by the word; while the word must also be elastic and comprehensive enough to take in the signification of “the Spirit of the Truth.” Is it not a teaching, inspiring, guiding influence?

ciples, we read that "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (xx. 22).

Here are the elements furnished us in the Gospels for opening the following records in the New Testament, with an intelligent apprehension of that third evangelic agency through which the Church of Christ was planted on the earth, and a way of communion was opened, that has never been closed, between God and men, through the Spirit of the Truth. On many of the highest themes of interest to our minds, we often realize, that large and august conceptions, even though they may be vague and but in outline, are far more precious to us than when we try to stiffen and define them in hard and positive dogmas. Is it not so with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? Let us follow it, however, as we have proposed, into texts.

The Holy Spirit was to take the place of Christ, and not to come till he had gone bodily from the earth. A spiritual influence was to be substituted for a bodily presence. It was to be within the gift and direction of Christ. It was the eternal spiritual power of God, appropriated in a direct way for the service of the Christian Church, for direct communion for a believer with God,—the channel and instrument and effective aid of Christian truth. One may almost say that it was to represent and stand for the whole executive and demonstrative spiritual efficiency of

God, as monopolized henceforward for the Gospel. So distinct and efficient an agency as this deserved a title, a name. It is certainly distinguishable from those methods of the Divine Power which create worlds and trees, and make the grass grow. The familiarity with which we find this Divine Agent or Agency spoken of, the moment we open the Acts of the Apostles, must impress every reader. The very distinct and always exactly defined range of influence, service, and operation, assigned to it, secures for it all the reverential Christian sentiment and faith due to one of the triple forces for planting, sustaining, and extending the church on the earth.

[ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.] After his resurrection, Jesus gave "commandments unto the apostles through the Holy Ghost:" and he bade them "wait in Jerusalem till they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost;" promising them that they should "receive power after that the Holy Ghost had come upon" them. We could not substitute the word "God" in these passages, nor in the large majority of those that follow. The day of Pentecost saw the promise, recorded by St. John, fulfilled. The disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance." Peter was "filled with the Holy Ghost," when he spoke to the rulers and elders. When the threatened believers met to strengthen each other, after they had "prayed, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Ananias and Sapphira, in "lying to the Holy Ghost, had not lied to men, but unto God," and had "agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." Peter, confronting the high priest with his

testimony, said, "We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom [which] God hath given to them that are obeying him." The seven deacons chosen to distribute the charities of the church were to be "rulers full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom." Stephen, in his martyrdom, "full of the Holy Ghost," said to his persecutors, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Disciples in Samaria, who had heard only the preaching of the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, and had not been initiated into the full Christian doctrine, "had not received the Holy Ghost." When the laying-on of the apostles' hands had conferred or signified the communication of that gift, Simon the sorcerer sought to purchase the power of bestowing it; but Peter rebuked him for thinking that "the gift of God might be purchased for money." "The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself" to the chariot of the treasurer of Candace; "and afterwards the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." Ananias was sent to put his hands on the converted Saul, that he "might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." The persecuted churches, in an interval of peace, "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." "While Peter was thinking on his vision, the Spirit said unto him, Three men seek thee." "The Holy Ghost fell on," and was "poured out," upon the Gentile converts, who "received the Holy Ghost, as well as" the Jewish disciples. "The Spirit bade Peter go with the men" who had come to seek him; and, as he began to speak, "the Holy Ghost fell on those to whom he spoke, as on us at the beginning." It was that "baptism with the Holy Ghost" which the Lord had promised. So God gave the like gift "to all" believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. "And Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost." Agabus "signified by the Spirit" that there was to be a dearth. And again, binding Paul's girdle, he said, prophetically, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews bind its

owner." The Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul;" and they were afterwards "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Paul was "filled with the Holy Ghost" when he rebuked Elymas. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." "God gave to the Gentiles the Holy Ghost, even as he did to us," said Peter. The apostles announce their decision, in council, under the remarkable terms, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." What can this mean, but "It seemed good to us, guided by the Divine Spirit of our Gospel faith"? Paul and Timothy "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost;" for "the Spirit suffered them not" "to speak in Asia." Some disciples at Ephesus, taught only in John's doctrine, on being questioned "whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed," replied, that they "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." After Paul had announced the full Christian doctrine, he laid his hands on them, "and the Holy Ghost came on them." It would be hard to substitute the word "God" for "Holy Ghost" in this passage. The believers had certainly heard that there was a God; but they had not heard of that special divine spiritual agency which complemented the doctrinal teaching of Christ. "The Holy Ghost witnessed" to Paul that persecution awaited him in every city. The Holy Ghost had made the pastors at Miletus the overseers of their flocks. "The disciples, through the Spirit," warned Paul "not to go to Jerusalem." — [EPISTLE TO ROMANS.] "Jesus Christ, declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." "If ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall

live." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "The Spirit also beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "We have the first-fruits of the Spirit." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." "My conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost." "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost." "That the offering-up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God." "I beseech you by the love of the Spirit." — [1st EPISTLE to CORINTHIANS.] "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God." "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." "We have received the Spirit, which is of God." "The words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "Ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God." "I think also that I have the Spirit of God." "No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." — [2d EPISTLE to CORINTHIANS.] "God hath given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "The epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the

Spirit of the living God." "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "God hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." "Approving ourselves as the ministers of God by the Holy Ghost."

We have thus distributed under their appropriate heads the sentences found in the scriptural documents which we proposed to examine, assigning respectively to God, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, the office and agency appropriated to each of them in the plan and in the planting of the Gospel. It remains that we bring together all the passages of the New Testament which present the three evangelical names in one grammatical sentence.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. xxviii. 19.

"For God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*" [Christ]. John iii. 34.

"Jesus, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," &c. Acts ii. 33.

"Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Acts vii. 55.

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost." Acts x. 38.

“If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He,” &c. Rom. viii. 11.

“I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” Rom. xv. 30.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” Gal. iv. 6.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom,” &c. Eph. i. 17.

“For through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Eph. ii. 18.

“In whom [Christ] ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. ii. 22.

“Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” Heb. ix. 14.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter i. 2.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Peter iii. 18.

I have already remarked, that the sentences which thus bring together the names of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, might reasonably be expected to furnish the most facile materials for the statement or exhibition of the doctrine of a Triad of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, if that be, indeed, a Gospel doctrine. But how unlike are the simple contents of

those sentences to the metaphysics of that doctrine ! Still these sentences, as do the other classes of sentences which we have reviewed, present us with emphasis the three evangelic names.

Thus we find it to be all through the sacred record. All the planning and working and aiding and strengthening, all the directing and inspiring and blessing, involved in the planting of the Gospel in this world, is distributed into three portions ; and each portion is assigned respectively to God, the Father ; to Jesus Christ ; and to the Holy Spirit. No history, no narrative, is so lucid, as is, in this respect, the Gospel record. No joint work was ever done in this world, no partnership or fellowship was ever engaged in any enterprise, in which the share of each laborer or agency was so definitely and accurately distributed and assigned, as is the whole practical work of the Gospel parted, step by step, act by act, to God, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

Now, the doctrine of the Trinity, in the largest and most generous view which we can take of it, is to be regarded as the result of the efforts of the minds of multitudes of Christian disciples to do justice to these plain statements of Scripture. Leave out of view, for a moment, the vain speculation connected with the doctrine of the Trinity as an attempt to find a Triad of personalities in the Godhead, and look at the subject only practically. Here are three names brought

together to define agents or agencies, partners, co-workers, joint actors, in the Gospel service. Christians reverently recognize this combination of agencies in their divine harmony of purpose and action; and then the question arises, "What are we to think about the relation that exists between these Three?" It is at this point that what Neander calls the "practical Trinity" of the Gospel system assumes its ground; and it is also at this point that speculation begins its theoretical systematizing, for the sake of developing a dogma about the mode of the divine existence, or about the internal constitution of the Godhead. The method of thought and the exercise of faith required for dealing with the practical Trinity are quite unlike those which are engaged upon the speculative Trinity. The practical Trinity distributes the divine agencies employed in the work of the Gospel into three sets of activities, three directions and spheres of efficiency, each of which contributes its own joint aid in the Gospel dispensation, — God, the Father, planning and perfecting the work; Jesus Christ manifesting the divine life; and the Holy Spirit, which is the demonstrative spiritual energy of God operating through Christian truth, being the medium of divine influence to the heart of the believer. The speculative Trinity goes far beyond and away from this subjective mode of conception, and proceeds to construct a theory of

an objective character; viz., that the Divine Nature unites three distinct personalities, each of which is essentially and independently God.

Now, when we are told that the vast majority of Christians in every age have been, and still are, Trinitarians, we have to ask, What is meant by being a Trinitarian? Are we to regard it as the main or the preponderating element in that title, that every one who assumes it or bears it signifies thereby, that he goes beyond the range of all mortal conceptions to catch and hold the idea that the one God exists in a Triad of persons? No: I have read the works and conferred with the minds of very many avowed Trinitarians all in vain if I have not certified to myself, beyond all doubt, this assurance, — that it is not for the purpose of speculating about the mode of the divine existence or the contents of the Godhead, but simply to do justice to the evangelical recognition of three divine agencies in the practical work of the Gospel, that they embrace the doctrine of the Trinity. If that inference be true, — and I have no more doubt of its truth than I have of the existence of the sun, — then I feel at liberty to insist that the majority of Christian believers have accepted only what is defined as the practical Trinity, in distinction from the speculative Trinity. Their minds are filled with a few or more of those Scripture sentences which we have been classifying, but which the mass of readers and

hearers do not classify ; and from the blending together, without discrimination, of the divine works and offices going with the three evangelic Names, multitudes acquiesce in inferring that some doctrine of the Trinity, they know not exactly what, is necessary to do justice to the obvious teaching of the New Testament. All that they design or aim after, or intend to believe or to accept, is, that, when the Gospel reveals to them new and endearing relations with God, — adding adoption by him in Christ, and communion with him by the Holy Spirit, to the relation of a creature to the Creator, — the Gospel fixes their faith upon three divine Co-workers, — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To millions and millions who have been ranked as Trinitarians, and have thought themselves Trinitarians, this, and only this, has been the substance of their Trinitarianism. They may have assented afterwards, and through a much less independent and responsive action of their minds, to the speculative device into which Trinitarianism developed itself ; namely, that, in the one God, there are actually three persons, or independent and organic subsistencies. They may have assented to that speculative theory ; that is, they may have been willing, when out of their depth in the floods of mystery or floating in the abysses of their ignorance, to catch at any buoy that offered them a hold, without considering that the buoy was floating in the same sea

with themselves. But if any one tells me that the vast majority of Christians, ranked as Trinitarians, have puzzled their brains upon that problem of the Godhead, as a Unit of Being, composed of a Triad of Persons, I can only say, with due deference, I do not believe it: nor do I think I should affront charity if I added, that I know the assertion is not true. Multitudes have accepted the notion, as taught to them by trusted guides in religion. Others have accepted it as a hiding-place, a relief from perplexity, a way of disposing of complicated doctrines, which, they are told, are revealed. Others, still, have, after a fashion, verified the dogma by patching together sentences and scraps of Scripture into a complex mosaic of doctrine; the process and the result being something as follows: — “God the Father, and Jesus Christ, are certainly spoken of as distinct persons; the Holy Spirit, though more frequently referred to as a gift or influence, that can be ‘bestowed,’ be ‘poured out,’ or that can ‘fall upon,’ the subjects of it, is, at least in two or three sentences, spoken of as a person: to these three persons divine offices are assigned, and divine honors and attributes are rendered: therefore each of them is essentially God, though God is nevertheless One.” Some few persons have really, and, as they think, with intelligent and enlightened reverence, certified to themselves the speculative doctrine of the Trinity, and have assim-

lated it with the faith of their souls. My own conviction is, that this class of persons, who have heartily accepted the speculative doctrine of the Trinity, after a thorough and independent study of all its elements and bearings, does not outnumber those, who, after the same processes of heart and intellect engaged upon the doctrine, have rejected it as visionary and thoroughly unscriptural. Nor must we forget in this enumeration still another class of persons, who have intensified and exaggerated the doctrine, and have mystified their own minds and feelings about it; and who then speak of it as the very arcana of the Gospel, its central truth, its wellspring, its pivot-point of doctrine.

And yet, notwithstanding all the statements which I have just made, I have now to note the fact, that the Orthodox-Church doctrine receives what Neander terms the speculative Trinity. All those views of the relation between God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, which regard and interpret the New-Testament doctrine concerning them as simply representing to us three modes of manifestation, or three directions or methods of operation, of the Divine Essence, are convicted and denounced heresies. "The church" has repudiated and condemned them in every shape and phase under which they may be held. Every opinion on this subject is heretical which stops, even by a hair's breadth, short of the

ecclesiastical dogma, that, in the Godhead, there are three independent and co-equal persons. Church orthodoxy is not content with any other formula for its faith on this point than one which asserts that there is a permanent, essential, and organic basis in the essence of the Godhead for a Triad of subsistencies. The Antitrinitarian may go the length of admitting, that, according to his reading of the New Testament, and his view of the doctrine to be drawn from it, some element contributed by the Gospel revelation of God, the Father; of Jesus Christ; and of the Holy Spirit,—is necessary to constitute the God of the Christian. But this, too, is “heresy,” because it stops short of the full recognition of three real and actual personalities in the Godhead. Church orthodoxy is committed, by its formulas and standards at least, to the speculative Trinity. How did this come about? The process is known, in every stage of it, to a thorough Christian scholar; and every stage of it, too, is evidently seen by him as transpiring within the range of a human philosophy and an earth-born metaphysics.

Among the passages found in the New Testament, in which God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are named in connection in a single grammatical sentence, I omitted to copy one which we read in our common version of the Scriptures. It is the following sentence from First Epistle of John v. 7: “There are

Three that bear record in heaven, — the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One.” That sentence, which John never wrote, and which he never saw; which had no place in Scripture till comparatively modern times; which is repudiated as an exposed and unquestionable interpolation by all competent and honest biblical critics, Roman Catholic and Protestant, of every sect and name, — that sentence is no unfair type of the presence in the Christian creed of the doctrine which the sentence comes very near to stating. We know the contents of the Christian Scriptures before that sentence was foisted into them. We know the contents of the Christian creed before it contained a speculative doctrine of the Trinity. We can trace the process by which both the interpolated and spurious text, and the metaphysical and thoroughly human doctrine, came in where they were not before. How significant is the fact, — how suggestive, at least, ought it to be to Trinitarians, — that the only sentence in the whole Bible which even approximates to a statement of their doctrine is a corrupt and fraudulent interpolation of Scripture!

Any one, who is interested to trace the process by which the speculative doctrine of a Triad of persons in the Godhead wrought its way into the prevailing creed of Christendom, can find the information which he seeks, in the works of Neander, to which I have

already referred. It will require a fixed engagedness of mind, and a faculty for abstract thought and the apprehension of subtle distinctions, verbal and substantial, in any reader, to comprehend what is written in those pages. The subject-matter is difficult, the method of its development is necessarily intricate, and the Germanisms of the writer are an additional embarrassment to the reader.*

The help and information afforded by the great church historian are especially valuable on two accounts. First, as showing what are the primary materials in the New Testament for any doctrinal system, and how these materials were employed by Christians for more than two hundred years, without resulting in any such doctrine of the Trinity as was afterwards received; second, as explaining to us through what additional elements of speculation and of constructive ingenuity the doctrine of the Trinity was gradually developed. Nor is any one, however his sympathy or faith may be at issue with this metaphysical intermeddling with themes too high for the reach of man, in a fit mood of mind or

* Neander was reputed a Trinitarian; but his Trinitarianism is of the most shadowy character. Probably Unitarians are far better satisfied than are Trinitarians with his method of dealing with doctrinal discussions. The latter, however, are forced to accept his manuals, for lack of better from an equally competent source. It is not strange that the reluctance to admit some of the damaging concessions made in his candid pages should have led the able and laborious American translator of his "History of the Christian Church" occasionally to qualify the strong utterances of the original. The English editor of the American translation, who professed to "revise" it, has tampered with the work.

heart for reading those pages, unless he can discern, that, though the themes rise to insoluble mysteries, there may be even practical benefits in the study and discussion of them. It is better that human brains should ache, than that mind or heart should deny themselves exercise upon the deep things of God.

The speculative doctrine of the Trinity, which has received the stamp of orthodoxy in the formulas of the Christian Church, is wholly and entirely the result of the constructive ingenuity of the human intellect. The problem was to develop a dogmatic conception and statement of the relation that subsists — not merely for the purpose of revelation, but in the eternal and organic essence of the divine economy — between God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Scripture, indeed, furnished materials for the work, as a quarry furnishes the stock for the architect; but the result was a marvellous combination of the wit of man with the wisdom of God. The process by which the speculative doctrine was developed is one of profound and instructive interest in all its stages, — more so, however, in its stages than in its result, — when we regard it purely as a process pursued by the efforts of the mind, quickened by the most intense zeal of the spiritual instinct, and engaging all those antagonisms of the speculative faculty which are brought into the sharpest conflict

only when they are exercised upon abstract themes. Scripture, it was agreed on all sides, did not offer a full-shaped and defined doctrine on the great problem. That was to be constructed when the time should come for it. Some seven or eight generations of Christians lived and died, content to read what we have been reading from the pages of the New Testament, without having the help of dogmatic formulas to guide their belief, however they may or may not have felt the need of them. They looked to God, the Father, as the Fountain of Gospel blessedness; they believed in Jesus Christ, as the channel through which it flowed to the world; and they felt the power of the Holy Spirit, which incorporated the truth and the hope with the living experience of their souls. But they had not engaged upon the metaphysics which was by and by to perplex "the simplicity that is in Christ." The elements of the coming conflict were, however, gathering and working together. The first debate was raised upon the nature of Christ, and his organic relation to the Godhead. The Hebrew mind communicated its idea of Sonship from and with the Father,—an idea that centred in love, in filial conformity and tender affinity of affection. The Greek mind contributed, through the Alexandrine philosophy, the idea of the Logos, the Word,—which expressed the outgoing and working of the intelligence of God, or an intermediate operation

between the Divine Essence and the creation, — the first link in the chain which stretches outward from God. These two ideas furnished the scriptural and the metaphysical elements to be wrought into a dogma concerning Jesus Christ. Soon after came in the subtle question about the likeness or the identity of substance between the Father and the Son ; and the question, whether the generation of the Son was eternal, or dated in some epoch of ages. Neander intends to deal tenderly with Arius, when he tells us, that, with some excellent gifts and high qualities, “ he possessed no depth of religious intuition or apprehension of Christian truths, and hence had not the disposition fitted for receiving several dogmas.” The historian adds, “ The profound idea, expressed by Origen, of an eternal, beginningless generation of the Son, was inconceivable to his matter-of-fact understanding.” And is it not equally inconceivable to anybody’s and everybody’s understanding ? But I must not allow myself to be drawn into the mazes of the disputation which ends in establishing in terms the dogma of the Deity of Christ, as defined by ascribing to him co-eternity and co-substantiality with God. Still another and quite independent element of the work of theorizing, needed for the development of the speculative doctrine of the Trinity, was that which was presented by the Holy Spirit. The method of dealing with that element of the theory,

and the stage which had been reached in dogmatizing upon it, are well defined by Gregory Nazianzen, as late as A.D. 380, thus: "Some of our theologians regard the Spirit simply as a mode of divine operation; others, as a creature of God; others, as God himself; others, again, say that they know not which of these opinions to accept, from their reverence for Holy Writ, which says nothing about it" (*De Trinitate*, ii. c. 29).

Happily for those who cannot read the elaborate and difficult tomes of church history, there are easily accessible three documents, symbols of faith, which present, in a most significant way, first the simple elements of Christian doctrine; and then, successively, the development of ecclesiastical dogmatizing with them and upon them. The first is the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is wholly free of Trinitarianism; the second is the Nicene Creed, in its original and modified forms, which exhibits the incipient stages of Trinitarianism in relation to the Father and the Son; third, the Athanasian Creed, dating from the fifth century, which presents Trinitarianism in its complete development. Marvellous is the contrast between the tortuous method of doctrinal statement in that formula and the Scripture sentences which we have been reading. As a spurious text, interpolated into the New Testament in the interest of the doctrine of the Trinity, is no unfair exponent of

the relation of that doctrine to the actual substance of the Gospel ; so the scholastic subtleties and the metaphysical puzzles of the Athanasian Creed may stand as significant symbols of the tricks with language and the perplexities of thought needed alike in the statement and in the conception of the doctrine which it so consistently presents to us. Suppose an attempt, made as an experiment in one of our public schools, to teach either of the arts of reading, grammar, arithmetic, or logic, through the help of the Athanasian Creed ! Certain it is, whether or not the pupils were effectually warned against confounding the divinities therein recognized, it would be difficult to guard against confusion in "the humanities." Yet that creed is really a consistent, if not the best possible, result of an effort to grapple with the metaphysical subtleties with which it deals. Hard as the creed is, it nevertheless practises a kind of mercy in its torture ; as it fails to recognize, or to press upon us, at least one-half of the gnarled and knotty elements which enter into its whole doctrine.

In rejecting, without compromise or hesitation, the speculative doctrine of the Trinity, we must be content to bear the censure of so-called Orthodoxy, with whatever penalties accompany it. Our chief plea must be, that we cannot conceive that the eminently practical and intelligible doctrines of the Gospel are

based upon an abstruse and occult dogma about a Triad of Persons in the Godhead. We are at liberty to elaborate the contents of the Scripture into a theory more consistent with their teachings: or, what is better still for most persons, we can learn to live as Christians, without having any dogmatic theory about the organic relation that exists between God, the Father; his Son Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.

Two or three questions, which are uniformly opened in connection with the long discussion we have pursued, invite a few closing words.

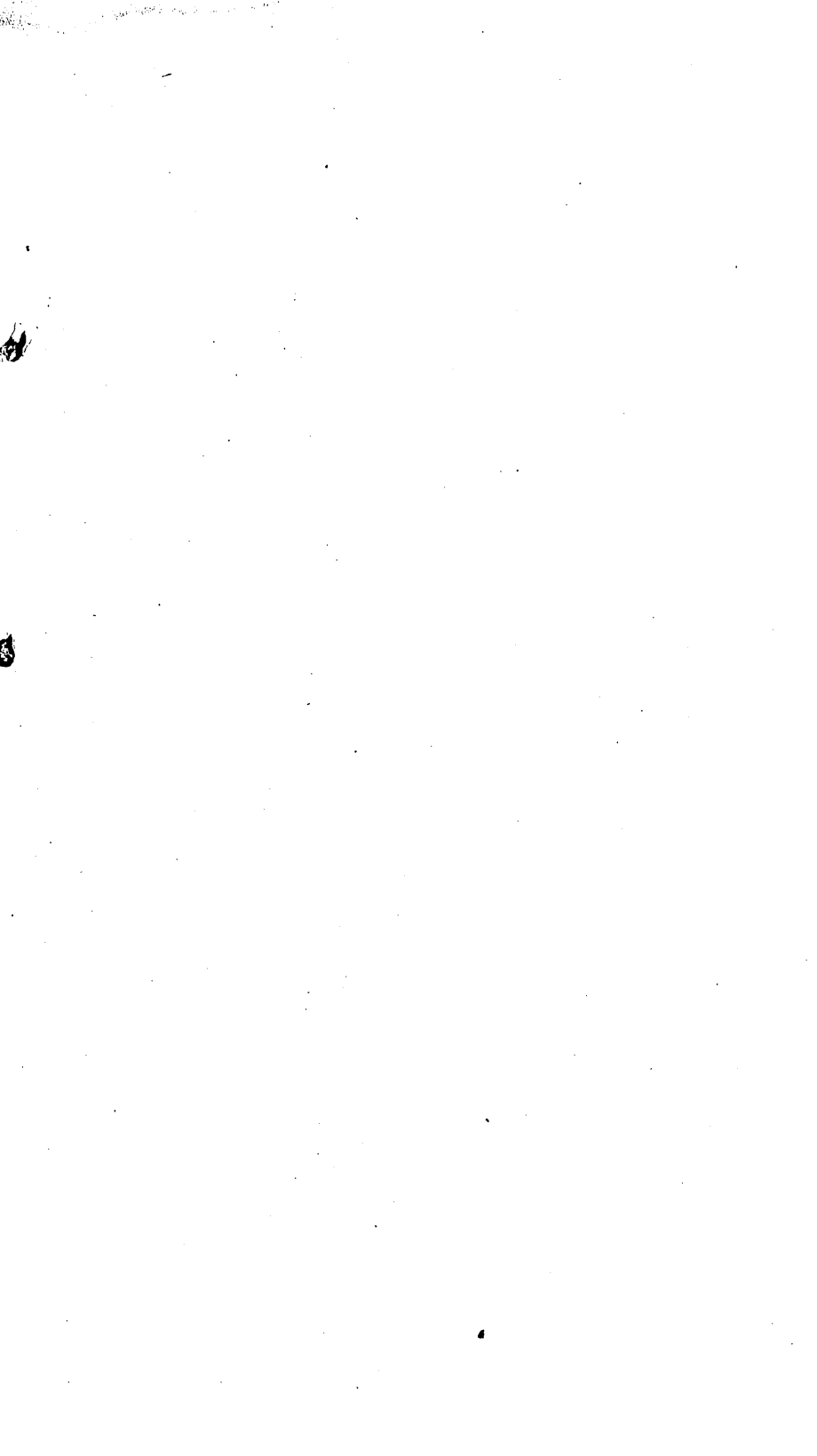
Shall we call Christ God? Well, pause upon the question. What shall we gain, and what shall we lose, if we call Christ God? Shall he be additional to the Being whom he himself called God? or shall he be identical with Him? We had a God before, — the God whom Christ revealed, to whom Christ prayed. Why should we confuse ourselves in this profound theme, under the vain hope of relieving ourselves? We may, indeed, infer, from the sum of the Gospel teachings, that we should not have known the Father but through the Son; and that the God in whom we believe testifies of himself to our souls through the divine life manifested in Christ. So far, then, as Christ represents and manifests the Father, he is a part of God; and what we learn and receive from him is necessary to complete our idea of God. But

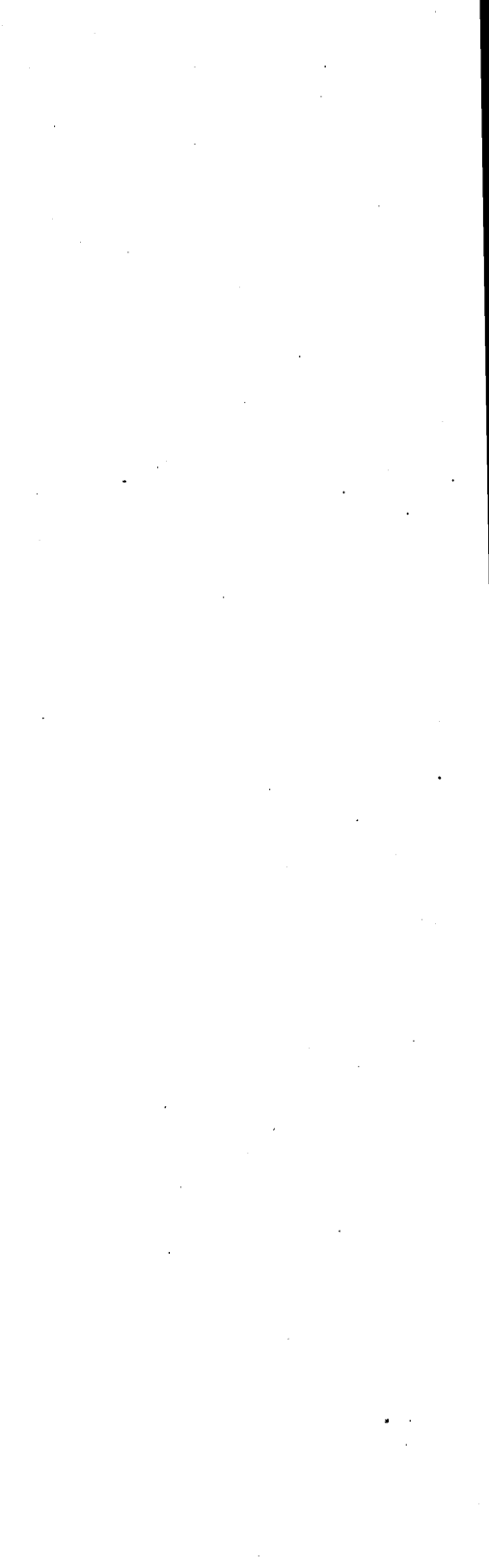
he cannot be to us both the Revealer and the Revealed. If we accept him as God, we lose him as a manifestation in the life of humanity.

Shall we pray to Christ? No : he himself forbade us to do that ; and taught us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father." Nor is there an instance, an example, in the New Testament, in which the highest religious homage is addressed to Christ. The martyr Stephen sends forth an ejaculation on his last breath, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ;" but it is to "Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

Shall we call the Holy Spirit God? No harm can come of that. It would be perfectly natural for us to do it. It is done in the New Testament. Certainly it is better to do that than to call the Holy Spirit one of three persons in the Godhead.

Shall we address prayer to the Holy Spirit? Yes : it is one way of addressing God. The saints of old have used that title of the Hearer, as well as of the Inspirer of prayer. Our devout, our earnest, our fervent prayers are addressed to God, by the Spirit, in the name of Christ. Let the prayer be sincere ; and we may trust that the Father will not reject it because we choose either of his divine names, or titles, by which to address Him.







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